

The State & Innocent Man



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THE

STATE OF INNOCENT MAN.

GENESIS I. 26.

*And God said, Let us make man in our image,
after our likeness.*

THE Sacred Volume, from the first Chapter of which these words are taken, is denominated, THE BIBLE, that is, THE Book, to intimate that it is divinely excellent, and that no other book, however excellent, is worthy to be compared with it. It is justly so denominated, for it can be proved to be the Word of God, and, unlike every other composition, its contents are sublime, inspired, and necessary truth. It informs us of every thing with which it becomes us to be acquainted. It informs us how this

wondrous world was made, what changes it has undergone, and how it shall finally be dissolved. But what is of particular importance, it gives us the most accurate and minute information concerning ourselves. It informs us in what state we were created : how we fell from that state, and to what a state of guilt, of ruin, and of misery we are now reduced, and what means the wisdom and grace of God have appointed to restore us to a greater than even our primeval happiness. It is to the first of these only—the state in which we were created,—that our attention is now called.—When God had created all his other works, and “ saw that they were good,” He then said,—“ Let us make man.”—And how was He to make him ?—“ Let us make man,” said the Eternal, “ in our image, after our likeness.”

Curiosity to know the history of the family or society to which we belong, seems to be a principle natural to the human mind. We carefully inquire into this history ; and every circumstance connected with it, assumes importance in our eyes, however trifling it may appear in the eyes of others.

We feel deeply interested, and desire to dwell upon it, whenever it is brought to our remembrance. Now this natural principle of curiosity should certainly impel us powerfully to inquire into the primeval state of that original pair from whom every one of us is descended. If we have the least curiosity, we must wish, we must be anxious to know the memoirs of the first Parents of us all: the history of that great Family of which every nation is a part; the origination of that abundant stock, the wide-spreading branches of which have covered the earth.

But desire to inquire into this, is more than mere curiosity: it is essential to the knowledge of religion. ~ We must know not only what man now is; but also what he was when he came from the hands of his Creator; what duties were required of him, and what were the powers by which he was enabled to perform them. This knowledge is necessary to give us deep and distinct impressions of the melancholy change, both in our nature and state, which we now experience, and of the necessity of that regeneration, that recovery from sin and Satan to

God and holiness, which is so energetically taught in the Gospel of Christ.

Now it must be abundantly evident to every one, that this requisite knowledge of the original state of man, can never be acquired by any efforts, however great, of mere unassisted reason. The original state of man is not a matter to be discovered by reasoning : it is a distant, historical fact, which can be learnt only from testimony, and as in this case, no mere human testimony is competent, it is to be learnt solely from Divine Revelation. He only who made man, can inform us how he was made, what were his powers, and what was the measure of his enjoyments. If God hath given us no such Revelation, then are we necessarily left in total ignorance of this most important doctrine. But the very circumstance of its being so important, and impossible to be discovered unless revealed by God, forms of itself a strong presumption that God hath actually revealed it.

That man once enjoyed a state both higher and happier than the present, was an

opinion current even in the heathen world. Their fabling poets mention and describe an era, when the gods were constantly visiting the earth, when all the earth's productions were spontaneous, when crime was unknown; when, go where you would, nothing met the eye but the grateful sight of peace, and purity, and innocence. This delightful era they entitled the **Golden Age**; and their accounts of this **Golden Age**, however fanciful and confused, had evidently their rise from the Mosaic account of the creation of man, and of his primary state in the world. Interspersed they were, indeed, with much darkness; but still they, doubtless, contained some faint rays originally emitted from Revealed Truth.—At any rate it seems certain, that man was not created in his present corrupt state. One who is so ignorant, and wayward, and wicked, could not be the immediate production of Him who is infinitely wise, and holy, and good. Accordingly Moses expressly tells us that man was, at first, free from all evil—lord of this lower world—the vicegerent of the Highest—the very mirror of his perfections. After giving being, in regular succession, to the elements, and to vegetable and animal existence, the

Creator is sublimely represented as making a solemn pause, and saying,—“ Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”—God spake, and it was done.—Behold the man appears!—the seat of order, the temple of innocence, glorious, “ in the Divine image, and after the Divine likeness.”

Let us then fully consider, in what this Divine image or likeness consisted.—The subject is of great importance. It tends to make us feel our present degeneracy, and to be anxious to recover the image which we have lost,—anxious to be “ created in Christ Jesus, unto good works.”

There have been theologians who have considered this Divine image as consisting in some external lustre, some visible glory which surrounded the body, much like what we still represent to ourselves when we fancy an angelic vision, “ clothed with light as with a garment.”—That the body of innocent man had some external lustre, some visible glory, such as Moses had, when he descended from the Mount of God, such as Jesus had, when he was transfigured, or such as

the saints shall have, at “the resurrection of the just,” I pretend not to deny. We have, perhaps, suffered by the Fall, even in our bodily *appearance*, as much as we have done in our bodily *strength*, and in the health and vigour of our souls. But, as this is not a matter that is revealed to us, we have just as little reason, positively, to affirm, as we have to deny it.—At any rate, no external lustre, no visible glory can express the meaning of this phrase,—“the image of God.” This must refer to something far more excellent, to something that adorns not the outward, but the inward man; for the external splendour of the Supreme Being, whatever it may be, affords us but the lowest idea of his unparalleled perfection.

Others again, (and men of considerable learning,) have supposed, that the image of God, after which Adam was made, means nothing more than what has been called the simple *idea* of him that existed in the Divine Mind before his creation. By his being made after the image of God, they understand precisely this—that God made him exactly according to the idea or model which He had previously formed of him, just as an

architect has first an *idea* or *scheme*, of the building he is to rear, and then rears it according to that *idea* or *scheme**.—But this opinion it is impossible to admit; for it makes no distinction between man and the beasts of the field, or even the inanimate creation. There can be no doubt that God made these, and every thing else, from design, or according to ideas previously formed of them.—Were the opinion just, then we should be obliged to believe, what no Christian, what no sensible person could believe, that the honour of bearing the image of God, may be ascribed to them as well as to immortal man.

There are others too, who have supposed the Divine Image to consist in the power and dominion with which innocent Adam was invested over the creatures.—That he was the representative of God, and under Him, had the sole power and dominion in this lower world, we readily admit; for it is expressly said,—that he had “dominion

* This opinion, if I mistake not, was first started by Philo the Jew.

"over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." But admitting this, can we ever suppose that power and dominion constitute the Divine image? Were this the case, then we should necessarily conclude, that those who have the most power and dominion, would always have the most resemblance to God: —a conclusion at which common sense sickens, and which uniform experience flatly contradicts.

It is obvious then, that the Divine image must be understood as consisting in something very different. God is a Spirit, and every resemblance of Him must be a spiritual resemblance—The subject to which it relates must be the spiritual part of man: his rational and immortal soul. Now, the soul can resemble or bear the image of God only when He enlightens it with the knowledge of his truth, conforms it to his holy will, and makes it, in some measure, a partaker of his happiness.

Knowledge, holiness, and happiness, then, are doubtless what constitute the image of God—that image in which Adam was made.

KNOWLEDGE was a part of this image.—That it was so, is evident not only from the nature of the thing; but also from the express language of the apostle. “Ye have put on,” says he to the Christians whom he was addressing,—“Ye have put on the new “man which is renewed in *knowledge*, after “*the image of Him* who created him*.” The knowledge of Adam was far superior to what we have now any idea of. Sin has now darkened our minds, and brought weakness and disorder into all our faculties. But man, at first, was perfectly innocent, and while his innocence lasted, his understanding was unclouded, and all his perceptions, were super-eminently clear, lively, and vigorous. We may judge of his amazing sagacity, the depth of his views, the extensiveness of his knowledge, from his being able, at once, to give names to all the creatures, according to their different constitutions. “The Lord God,” we are

* Col. iii. 10.

told; “ formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam, to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof: and Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field *.”

Now, that Adam should, at once, without labour or premeditation, be able to give names to all the infinite variety of creatures which were brought to him, and which he had never before seen,—and names too, so adapted to their respective natures, that God himself sanctioned the nomenclature,—this is truly astonishing, and what we may venture to affirm, the most acute philosopher that ever lived, nay the most illustrious college of philosophers ever assembled, durst not have attempted.

But Adam’s knowledge of *moral*, as well as of *natural* things, was incomparably excellent. He knew, and (glorious privilege!) he freely conversed with God: he knew the nature and extent of his holy law: he need-

* Gen. ii. 19, 20.

ed it not to be written either in books, or on tables of stone : it was written in such deep and legible characters on the table of his heart, that till defaced by disobedience, it was impossible for him either to mistake or to forget it.—What a beautiful and noble part of the image of God !

But Knowledge was not the only part of this Divine image : it was accompanied by unspotted HOLINESS. The Apostle expressly tells us, that “ the new man,” that is, our restoration to the Divine image, consists in being “ created in righteousness and true “ holiness.” Holiness is the brightest glory of the Divine perfections. It is what the angels, day and night, joy to celebrate in their songs of praise. “ Holy,”—they ever sing,—holier, holiest is “ The Lord of Hosts.”—Holiness in God, is his invariable and necessary disposition to maintain all possible order, and promote all possible happiness throughout the universe. And holiness in his creatures, consists in their perfect conformity to his will, in the perfect consecration of all their powers and faculties to his

service. Now, this perfect holiness, Adam, doubtless, possessed immediately after he was created, and while he continued in the garden of innocence. He knew most intimately the divine law ; what he admired he chose, and evinced his choice by the most spotless and ardent obedience*. No wrong bias, no corrupt principle disturbed, for a moment, the harmony of his mind. His affections and passions, all pure and spiritual, were ceaseless ministers to the Lord. LOVE stood before his altar, and offering her grateful incense, kept up the hallowed flame. FEAR, with angel-reverence, bowed down before the sanctuary, where, as yet, no interposing veil had hid the presence of Divinity. HOPE lifted up her hands and eyes to heaven, and showed, by the intenseness of her countenance, where and what she expected to be. JOY told her raptures in glad hosannahs of praise, and sought, on earth, to join in those songs which Seraphs sing in the celestial mansions. Whilst MEMORY unfolded the records of eternal love, and, with extacy, reviewed the glorious past : And CONSCIENCE, yet unsullied, stood by, witnessed the sacred service, and gave her

* See Haweis' Sermons.

approbation as the voice of God.—Such was man in the day when God created him. Knowledge and Holiness,—the image of God,—all that is great, and all that is excellent, conspired to adorn and sublimate his soul.

Now from this pre-eminent knowledge and holiness, there must necessarily have resulted another part of the Divine image—CONSUMMATE HAPPINESS. Such is the constitution of things, that happiness is inseparable from knowledge and holiness. God is infinitely wise and holy, and He is therefore infinitely happy. Angels too, are far more wise and holy than men, and as they are more wise and holy, they are proportionally more happy.—How transcendently happy, then, must our first parents have been before the fall! The earth had not yet suffered the curse: sin had not yet entered and spread its rueful ravages: pain and sickness were strangers to the body: inquietude, fear, and remorse, were strangers to the soul. The soul, conscious of innocence, and admitted into the fullest communion with its Maker, felt the joy, and reflected the serenity of heaven.—O happy, happy Pair! A

cloudless mind, a clear conscience your continual feast—"health the charmer," your companion, every angel your friend, God himself your Father, and Paradise your home!—And but for sin, this high felicity would never have had an end. What man *then* was, he was destined, while obedient, *always* to be; or if there was to be any change, it was to be a change only from glory to glory. This corruptible would never have seen corruption, nor this mortal been subjected to mortality. The tree of life would have been the sacramental pledge of the eternity of our happiness. "Eye hath not "seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it "entered into the mind to conceive," what would have been the measure of our divine enjoyments.

Such is the image in which our first parents were originally made. It consisted in knowledge, and holiness, and happiness. And all this, had not sin entered into the world, would have been to us an eternal, and eternally increasing inheritance.

Let us here adore the goodness of God : Let us think of the evil of sin :—let us con-

sider how much we are indebted to Jesus Christ.

LET US ADORE THE GOODNESS OF GOD. God is good, and delights to communicate happiness. For ever independent and glorious in himself, nothing but a desire to communicate happiness can be conceived as inducing Him to give birth to his creatures. Accordingly, when they came from his creating hands, evil had no place in his works. Man in particular, He "made in his own "image, after his likeness," and surrounded with all the delights of Paradise.—Paradise ! how sweet thy blissful bowers ! How did thy rich profusion charm the eye ! How did thy inviting sweets, thy aromatic fragrance, feast the senses ! But what was far more glorious, in thy sacred retreats, the soul held high converse with its God, knew and admired his works, reflected his image, and rejoiced with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.—O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name ! What is man that Thou art, mindful of him, and that Thou shouldst have clothed him, even at first, with such glory and power ! O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men !

LET US THINK OF THE 'EVIL' OR SIN. Sin is the very reverse of all that perfection in which Adam was made, and for which, had he not fallen, all his posterity were destined. Sin is the transgression of the law of God, it effaces the divine image, expunges knowledge, holiness, and happiness from the mind, and sinks it in misery, and ruin, and death. Other evils may be exaggerated; but this original evil, it is impossible to exaggerate. It blasted man in the morning of his existence, and it cast down angels, from their radiant thrones, to the doleful abodes of utter darkness.—It is the enemy of God, and the bane of the universe. Let us then abhor it, with all our soul and with all our strength. If we see it as it really is, and have the consciousness that we are all chargeable with its direful guilt, we shall feel impelled to smite our breasts, and exclaim—"God be merciful to us sinners!" "Take away all our sin, and create us again 'in thy image!'" And if sin is of such an odious and dangerous nature, what a dreadful state must they be in, and how fast hastening to final ruin, who have never yet,

seen the evil of sin, who have never yet groaned under the burden of sin, nor cried to Him " who appeared to take away sin " by the sacrifice of himself!"—May the Lord open their eyes, give them repentance, and form, even in them, " his image and " likeness!"

But while we adore the goodness of God, and think duly of the evil of sin, LET US LIKewise CONSIDER HOW MUCH WE ARE INDEBTED TO JESUS CHRIST. When our first parents, "foolish and unwise," fell from their first estate, lost the image of God, and forfeited every claim to life and happiness, Jesus Christ was revealed as our great Restorer, in that gracious promise—*the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.* And to accomplish this most merciful purpose, he, though the only begotten Son of God, came in the fulness of time, assumed our nature, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And all who believe in him shall never perish: they are freely justified: they are washed and they are sanctified: they bear the image of God,

and from guilt and fear are restored to purity, and peace, and hope. The image which they at present bear, and whose lineaments are *knowledge, holiness, and happiness*, fair as it now is, shall be made far more glorious, shall be made perfect, in that Paradise above, into which they shall be joyfully received, and from which they shall never be excluded. Praise then, the Lord Jesus Christ, O our souls! and forget not all his benefits! Let us make it the subject of our fervent prayers; let us make it the business of our whole lives to be grateful to him, and to show our gratitude by carefully observing all things whatsoever he hath commanded us. Let this be the language of our love—
“ We are crucified with Christ, nevertheless we live, and yet not we, but Christ liveth in us, and the life we now live in the flesh, we live by faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us.” Thus shall it be made evident, that, though in Adam we died, yet in Christ we are made alive; and that, at last, we shall

“ behold his face in righteousness and be
“ satisfied with his likeness.”—But we can-
not now conceive what it is to reflect the
emanations of Divinity ; to “ behold the
“ glory of the Lord, and to be changed
“ into the same image. from glory to
“ glory !”

FALL OF MAN.

GENESIS III. 22, 23, 24.

And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil. And now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

God is essentially good, and ever disposed to communicate all possible happiness. He cannot but know in what happiness consists, and that it is preferable—infinitely preferable to its opposite: and being self-existent, independent and omnipotent, we cannot but suppose that He is continually communicating it. A question then naturally occurs, if God is essentially good,

and delighteth to communicate all possible happiness, how comes evil to exist under his government?

Of this difficult and important question, which has engaged the attention of speculators of all ages, I will not here attempt a particular solution. I may however remark, that though God is good, evil confessedly exists, and that therefore this evil must be consistent with the goodness of God, whether we short-sighted mortals be able to perceive the consistency or not. At present I need only refer to the scriptural account of primeval man. In the beginning, he was a stranger to evil, and had implanted in him, all the faculties which were specially adapted to the perfecting of his nature. He "walked with God," free from suffering, and without the least moral indisposition. God, we are told, made man upright, after his own image, and enriched him with every thing requisite to his happiness. Man himself is represented as the immediate cause of his own evil. He listened to the deceiving voice of the tempter, transgressed the divine law, and involved himself and his posterity in ruin. He be-

came naturally subject to a signal punishment, and God expelled him the garden of Eden, and "placed at the east of it, cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Sore regret, on account of the bliss which they had forfeited, and fearful anticipation of the sorrow and death which they were doomed to suffer, now deeply saddened the minds of Adam and Eve. With tears, they looked back on the happy seat, so lately theirs, and "hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow, through Eden took their solitary way".

The garden of Eden, which they were thus expelled, has been generally supposed

* "Various conjectures have been formed concerning the place where man was first created, and where the garden of Eden was situated; but none of these have any solid foundation. The Jews tell us that Eden was separated from the rest of the world by the ocean, and that Adam, being banished therefrom, walked across the sea, which he found every way fordable, by reason of his enormous stature. The Arabians imagined paradise to have been in the air, and that our first parents were thrown down from it on their transgression, as Vulcan is said to have been thrown down headlong from heaven by Jupiter."

to be the original state in which our first parents were placed. But this opinion, however general, seems to be founded in mistake. That our first parents were in a state, previous to their enjoyment of the garden of Eden, is evident, I think, to any one who carefully peruses the early part of their history. In the 16th and 17th verses of the second Chapter of the Book of Genesis, we are told that "the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Let it be remarked, that he received this prohibition, when he was in the garden of Eden; but if we turn to the 29th verse of the first Chapter, we shall find God giving to man a general grant, without any prohibition:—"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to you it shall be for meat." It is evident, beyond dispute, that these two passages refer to two different states. When the first grant was

given—, the grant of *every tree* in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, Adam and Eve must have been where no tree of knowledge, no forbidden tree grew, and they must have been intended to live, at least, so long in that state as to have occasion for food, else the grant would have been superfluous; and apt to mislead them with regard to the subsequent restriction. And what I have now inferred from the two passages just quoted, is corroborated by another passage, the 8th verse of the second Chapter:—"And the Lord God "planted a garden eastward in Eden, and "there he put the man whom He had "formed."—Here we should attend to this phrase—"the man whom He had formed." The man, it would appear, was not formed in the garden; but in a state prior to it, where he had *every tree* for food, without *any exception*, which was not the case when he was in Eden.

The truth seems to be this, Adam and Eve in their first state, were under the discipline of merely what is called *natural religion*. "The only commandment which they had from God, was to keep themselves

pure, to love Him and to love one another. This commandment, naturally arising out of the relations in which they were placed, they kept, and were unsullied. God therefore advanced them to a higher state, (for progression is characteristical of every rational and upright being;) He placed them amidst all the delights of paradise, and added to a *moral*, a *positive* injunction. The positive injunction was nothing more than this:—there was a certain tree in the garden, the fruit of which they were commanded not to taste. Now, here it deserves to be remarked, (as it is not often sufficiently attended to,) that a *positive* precept is generally a severer test of our obedience than even a *moral* one. A *moral* precept, strictly considered as such, is a precept the reason of which we see: a *positive* precept again, strictly considered as such, is a precept the reason of which we do not see. A *moral* duty then arises out of the nature of the case itself prior to any external command. A *positive* duty, on the other hand, does not arise out of the nature of the case; but merely from external command, nor would it be a duty at all, were it not for such com-

mand received from Him whose creatures and subjects we are. From the very circumstance, then, of a precept being not *moral*; but *positive*; from its not seeming to us to arise out of the nature of things; but merely from the authority which enjoins it, we are sometimes apt to consider it as comparatively unimportant, and may therefore, in the hour of temptation, be more easily led to disregard it. If the order of the whole man be not perfectly established; if our virtue be not perfectly confirmed, such an injunction, it is most likely, will be the very first that is violated.—This was precisely the case with Adam: he violated the positive injunction of his God, and became subject to punishment.—“God expelled him “from the garden of Eden, and placed at “the east of it cherubim and a flaming “sword, which turned every way to keep “the way of the tree of life.” *

In the history of this fatal catastrophe, there is mention made of a Wicked One, by whose infernal wiles it was effected. This Wicked One is denominated the Serpent. But surely it cannot be supposed that nothing more than a mere Serpent is here in-

tended. This is too absurd an idea to have any abettor. Moses, who records events just as they happened, without making any comment upon them, mentions indeed, that it was the Serpent who was the cause of the Fall ; and he was, it is true, the *instrumental* cause ; but doubtless it was the Devil, that accursed spirit, who was the *efficient* one. Accordingly, the SERPENT, the OLD SERPENT, the TEMPTER, the MURDERER, are the appellations bestowed upon him in the Scriptures. Now whether, upon the occasion before us, this malignant being actually assumed the form of the natural serpent, or is only described under the name, and by expressions borrowed from the corresponding nature, and qualities of that creature, and applied to him by analogy, seems to be a question of little or no importance, for either way, it is beyond all controversy, with those who believe the Bible, that Satan, the malignant being, is the principal agent in the whole affair. He is all along intended and addressed ; on Him was the weight and force of the tremendous sentence to light ; between His seed and that of the woman, was the enmity to subsist ; and His head was to be finally crushed by victorious Mes-

siah. However christians may have differed in their interpretation of particular words and phrases, this is the substance of all that has been, and always must be maintained among them, upon the subject. If all be confined to the natural serpent, or beast of the field, the account must then be nothing more than an *apologue* or *fable*, with a moral couched under it. But the sacred writers unquestionably refer to it, as true history, and invariably declare SATAN to have been the SERPENT, who "through his " subtlety deceived Eve," and made Eve again deceive her hapless husband. Both foolishly listened to the siren voice of seduction, and were enticed to their ruin; for by listening to it, they neglected, they despised God, and God expelled them the garden of Eden, "and placed at the east " of it, cherubim and a flaming sword, which "turned every way, to keep the way of the " tree of life *."

"But let us now consider more particularly the Fall of our primeval parents, and then

* A traditional doctrine of the *Brahmins*, is very much the same as this, as appears from the conversation of *Cadmus* with *Alexander*, related by *Strabo*, Lib. xv. p. 1042. Ed. Amv.

attend to its direful consequences.—The subject is unquestionably interesting, and serious meditation on it, may prove unspeakably profitable.

First let us consider more particularly the Fall of our primeval parents.—Our primeval parents, though, in the day of their creation, wise, and innocent, and happy, were nevertheless, as creatures, necessarily dependent upon God, and as such, were required by him to acknowledge their dependence. While they continued to acknowledge this, they were to enjoy his favour; but when they ceased to acknowledge it, they were to become miserable. The same, too, is the case with those superior beings denominated—Angels. They likewise have a law given them by God, obedience to which is necessary to their happiness. Some of these dared to transgress this law, and they immediately lost their happiness. They were expelled heaven, were cast down into hell, and are there “ reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day.” The law given to Adam, in paradise, and which was there to be the test of his obedience, was merely (as has been already remarked) this simple, ne-

gative one—to abstain from the fruit of a certain tree; “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.—Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”—It was called “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” both because by it, it was to be learnt whether our first parents were to continue good or become evil: and likewise, because, by its mortal fruit, they themselves learnt the difference between good and evil, by woful experience.—Satan, that enemy of all order and goodness, tempted them to eat of this forbidden fruit, and thus openly to rebel against the Lord their Maker. And observe, how he conducted the temptation. He addressed himself to the *woman*, and when she was *alone*; he addressed himself to *her*, thinking her the weaker vessel, and more liable to imposition: And he addressed her when *alone*, that she might not avail herself of the counsel and direction of her husband.—He began with persuading her to disbelieve the solemn threat of the Almighty. The Almighty had declared to Adam;—“In the

"day that thou eatest thereof, thou shall surely die;"—but the Tempter, replete with guile, " said unto the woman,—"Ye shall not surely die. The tree, he insinuated, is most inviting to the sight, and can produce the most glorious effects upon the mind. Perhaps, for this very reason, it is forbidden you by God. He wishes to keep you in low subjection; but only taste of this fair and beautiful fruit, and, instantly, ye shall be divinely wise: raised, in every way, far above all other creatures.—Ye shall be as gods: your natures perfect, and your happiness unmeasurable and independent."—The woman, lured by the hope of superior wisdom, and unmeasurable and independent happiness, fell a prey to the Tempter's wiles. Her curiosity was excited, her desire was inflamed, her reason was blinded, and in an evil moment, she put forth her hand, "she plucked, she ate."

"Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,
" Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
" That all was lost."

She herself, however, did not, as yet, feel her case so desperate. Still deluded with

the absurd hope of being so much more intelligent, and independent and happy, she held forth the fruit to her husband, and invited him to be partner in the basefahddeck. Ah! temptation is but too successful with the mind, when the person who presents it, is tenderly beloved. Adam too easily yielded. Eve, at once betrayed him, as she herself was betrayed by Satan. When she offered, the fair enticing fruit, he, hapless man! rather than see her, whom he loved,—who was his dearer self, perish alone, chose to eat with her; and be involved in the same common ruin.

"Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
In pang, and Nature gave a second groan;
Sky roar'd, and muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept, at completing of the mortal sin."

Mortal, indeed, it was: it intercepted the favour of God, deprived the unhappy pair, who committed it, of all their pristine joys, and exposed them to that "fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." Let none then, in the wantonness and wickedness of their hearts, dare to make light of it. They are fools, and worse than fools, who make sport of sin;—and what

then must they be, who make a mock of this original sin, which we can safely say, is fruitful and inclusive of every other. However it may appear to the shallow and careless thinker, it certainly includes in it, pride, infidelity, intemperance, ingratitude, injustice, and cruelty :—a frightful assemblage ! —and such, that surely we need not wonder at its being branded with the most signal marks of the Divine displeasure.

This original sin included in it *pride*.—Our first parents seemed impatient of control and ambitious of independence. They could not brook that submission which, as creatures, they owed to their Creator ; but in the true spirit of Lucifer, the first grand apostate, ate of the forbidden fruit, that they might rise to an equality with the Creator himself.

Their sin included in it, likewise, *infidelity*.—God strictly prohibited them from eating of “the tree of the knowledge of good and “evil ;”—promised them, if obedient, all the happiness which his bounty had provided ; and threatened, if disobedient, to drive them from his presence, and doom

them to destruction. But they disbelieved his word, and, like infidels of later times, treated both his promise and his threatening with contempt. And when they ceased to hearken to Him, to whom did they commit themselves? To "the Prince of darkness."—"the Father of lies, and the Enemy of all righteousness."

Their sin included in it, *intemperance*.—They gave loose to their irregular desires, and indulged them, though in direct opposition, not only to the command of God; but to the voice of their own conscience. And why?—Disgraceful intemperance! merely because the tree seemed "good for food, and pleasant to the eyes."

They were guilty of the blackest *ingratitude*. God had assigned them a distinguished place in his works, made them only a little lower than the angels, adorned them with his own image, and poured around them the varied delights of paradise. But they were base enough to forget this vast munificence, and join even the devil himself against their most bountiful Benefactor:—and that, too, because one baneful tree in

the garden was graciously forbidden them.—When we consider this, well may we blush for our nature, and with the Psalmist exclaim,—“Lord, what is man!”

Our first parents were likewise guilty of gross *injustice*. They put forth their hand to what was notoriously not their own, and what they were peremptorily prohibited by their righteous God.

And who does not see their monstrous *cruelty*? For the momentary gratification of a foolish and wicked desire, awakened and inflamed by an infernal foe, they were so unnatural as to bring ruin upon themselves, and entail it, dreadful inheritance, upon all their posterity.

Let none, then, presume to say, that theirs was a trifling or a venial sin. It was committed against the fullest knowledge of duty, and the strongest obligations to obedience. It was an act of the most horrid presumption in man, and of the most impious rebellion against his Maker.—It is, indeed, in all circumstances, in every possible case, “an evil and a bitter thing, to

"sin against God;" and it hath passed into an unalterable decree, that under his government, "though hand join in hand, sin shall not pass unpunished."—A question here, then, evidently occurs,—What was the punishment which followed the sin or fall of our first parents?

Thus, are we naturally led, after having considered the original sin itself, to attend, as was proposed, in the **SECOND PLACE**, to its direful consequences.

And here, what a dismal scene is presented to us!—The authority of God contemned, his law broken, and its dreadful penalty incurred!—Ah! will Satan now make good his bold assertion?—"Ye shall *not* surely die."—Alas! Alas! in this he triumphs, that he has deluded the unhappy pair, and "brought death into the world, " and all our woe,"—What a melancholy contrast does their present state of guilt exhibit to their former state of innocence! Formerly every thing conspired to make them happy; but now every thing is conspiring to overwhelm them with misery.—All nature is changed. The elements be-

girt to jar : storms and tempests break loose ; the earth, for their sake, is cursed with barrenness, and the serpent, the great agent in this calamitous revolution, is himself sentenced to the vilest degradation. Our first parents, the victims of his malice, already feel their utter wretchedness. They already feel themselves disrobed of all their primitive glory, and honour, and dominion. They feel the elements of infirmity, and disease, and death, working in their frame. They feel foul and unruly appetites and passions disturbing the harmony of the soul. The heart, that, once, was the seat of innocence and peace, now palpitates with guilty fear ; and the face that “ shone like “ the face of an angel ” is covered with sinful shame. The corrupted pair are afraid of God, and seek to flee from his presence. But He summons them trembling before him, charges them with their guilt, and leaves them without excuse. They are, therefore, expelled the garden of Eden, and at the east of it, are placed, “ cherubim “ and a flaming sword, turning every way, “ to keep the way of the tree of life.” Thus guilty, and exiled and fallen, they are doomed in sorrow, and in the sweat of their

brow, to eat their bread, till they return to the dust, from which they were taken. Death is the wages of sin ; and death too, consisting not only, in the dissolution of the body ; but in the dissolution of the union between God and the soul. What then remained to our first and rebellious parents, but “ indignation and wrath, tribulation “ and anguish,” had not their injured God spared them, and, O astonishing mercy ! Himself found out a ransom.

But did the Fall and its direful consequences terminate in Adam ? Alas ! sin, and sorrow, and death, have ever since cleaved to all his children. Every man, the man Christ Jesus excepted, has been deeply polluted with sin. For proof of this, we need not ransack the page of history, or enter into any laboured discussion. The melancholy truth lies open to common observation, and is acknowledged in every breast by the voice of conscience. We “ go astray as soon as we are born. The “ imaginations of our hearts are evil con-“ tinually.”—Sin is, almost, the constant employment of the impenitent; and the sad remains of its power, are felt, and daily

mourned over, even by the Christian.—“O, wretched man, that I am! (even he is sometimes forced to exclaim,) who shall “deliver me from the body of this death??”—In short, had any one the effrontery to say,—“I have no sin, he would only be “deceiving himself, and the truth would “not be in him *.”

Besides sin, we also inherit sorrow. Sorrow is the necessary consequence of sin; and we are born to sorrow “as the sparks “fly upward.” The voice of weeping is heard from the birth, and fallen man sighs on through every stage of future life. Either his own sufferings, or the sufferings of others, claim the tear of grief, nor is the claim remitted, or does the tear cease to flow, till it be dried up in the dust of the grave.

The grave is the house appointed for all living. Death too, is the consequence of sin, and “death hath passed upon all men, “for that all have sinned.”—And if sin is odious to God and ruinous to the soul, by

separating it from Him, the great Fountain of Life, then without embracing the salvation offered in the gospel, we must die also, the *second death*. We are by sin; as the Apostle awfully expresses it, “the children of wrath;” obnoxious to “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.”

Now, that all this sin and sorrow, and death, are derived from the fall of Adam, is evident from this, that till Adam fell, sin, and sorrow, and death, had no existence; but that ever since, they have, invariably existed. And if we know nothing of cause and effect, but that the one invariably follows the other, are we not bound to admit the scripture account, and warranted to conclude, that, in this instance, the fall of Adam has been the destructive cause, and sin, and sorrow, and death, the dismal effects.

¶ . . .

Various objections, I know, have been raised against this doctrine of the Fall; but all of them are as futile, as they are presumptuous. They can never, with fairness, be urged particularly, against this doctrine, as it is revealed in the Bible; for

they hold equally strong against any system, whether of religion or philosophy, which embraces *the origin of evil*. Surely it was not the Bible that introduced evil; why then should the Bible be, exclusively, blamed for its introduction? Though there had never been a Bible, evil, both moral and natural, and the same quantity of both, at least, would have existed in the world, that exists now. Let not then, the existence of evil be brought forward as an objection to our holy religion, since this is, by no means peculiar to it; but common to all religious and philosophical systems whatever *.

But the truth is, that all those who complain of our subjection to moral and natural evil, as inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of God, proceed upon this absurd idea, that all his creatures should be perfect. Now observe, for a creature to be perfect, he must be infallible, and consequently, omniscient; for where there is any defect of knowledge, there is not only the

* See Bishop Sherlock's Second Dissertation, annexed to his admirable work, entitled—**THE USE AND INTENT OF PROPHECY, IN THE SEVERAL AGES OF THE WORLD.**

possibility, but the probability of mistake, and consequently of sin ; and sin, we know, is necessarily connected with suffering. Now, if to be perfect ; free from the possibility of sin and suffering, a creature must be omniscient, then it follows that he must also be omnipresent, and if omnipresent, then self-existent, that is, the creature must become the Creator. But this is a palpable absurdity : it is nothing less than a contradiction in terms.

Still, however, it may be said, though a creature cannot, indeed, be naturally and absolutely perfect, yet ought not he to have been kept from sin by "the mighty power of God," like the angels in heaven ?—To this I answer, that some even of these were permitted to fall into sin, and are now suffering its punishment. But without dwelling upon this, I would only observe, that the question really amounts to nothing less than the following :—Why is there any gradation or difference in the divine works ? Why was not man an angel, and the angel an archangel ? Nay, why was not the clod of the valley raised into animal life ; and why

were not all animals raised to the highest rank of created intelligence?

But let it be well considered, that these are questions, the foundation of which cannot be removed; for had the good communicated by God to all his creatures, been ever so great, we might still have asked, why was it not greater?—Those who put such questions, instead of shewing, as they pretend, a laudable desire of knowledge, only evince their intolerable presumption and impiety. The truth is, that imperfection, and consequently liableness to moral failure, seem to be inseparable from the condition and character of creatures. The possibility of the existence of evil in the creation, could not, perhaps, be properly prevented.—Let us, however, rest satisfied with this, (which necessarily follows from the perfection of the Divine Nature,) that the present system of things is, upon the whole, the best, and will be ultimately productive of the greatest possible happiness. At any rate, it is beyond dispute, that what seems wrong here, will be rectified hereafter, and that the pain now felt, will be vastly

overbalanced by succeeding pleasure. The fall of man is only an introductory part of the great and glorious scheme, which embraces his final exaltation. “ As in Adam “ all die, even so in Christ shall all be made “ alive.—God willeth not, that any should “ perish; but that all ‘should come’ to re-“ pentance;—turn to him and live.” We should do well, then, to study this subject, not with the spirit of presumptuous cavillers, but with that of patient and humble inquirers. — Shouldst thou, worm of the dust! expect fully to comprehend the stupendous plan of infinite wisdom? Shouldst thou ever dream of setting up thy own vain imaginations, in opposition to the counsels of the Almighty, or of “ finding him out “ unto perfection?” Shouldst thou dare to

“ Snatch from his hand, the balance and the rod,
“ Rejudge his justice; be the God of God?”

How little of the scheme of Providence, now comes within mortal ken! We can now only see a few links of the great chain; but at a future period our views shall be ineffably extended; “ we shall see even as “ we are seen, and know even as we are

"known." Meanwhile, we should consider all the difficulties which here meet us in separation, as destined for the same salutary purpose, for which temptations are in practice; namely, to form within us habits of attention and discipline, that we may be qualified for the pure and perfect state, which will be hereafter and for ever.—But without continuing any longer in the illustration of this subject, we shall now direct our attention to the proper improvement of it.

From the doctrine of the Fall, we may learn to beware of temptation; to think of the baneful effects of sin; to be deeply impressed with a sense of the necessity of holiness, and to embrace, with ardent gratitude, the proffered salvation of Jesus Christ.

LET US LEARN TO BEWARE OF TEMPTATION. Temptation is the prelude to sin. It was the cause of the first and great transgression. Our first parents, being tempted, ate the forbidden fruit, and entailed disorder, and sorrow, and death, upon all mankind. Let us keep then our hearts with diligence, and abstain even from the ap-

pearance of evil." Let us pray for grace to help us to resist the solicitations of sense; for the " carnal or sensual mind is enmity against God;" —and to resist also those ambassadors of Satan, wicked men and seducers; whose way, notwithstanding their " fair speech," is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. When sinners then entice us, why should we ever consent? We should nobly dare to hold fast, unto the end, our integrity, even in the midst of a degenerate world. But there is one class of wicked seducers, who, in "these dregs of time," too generally obtain, and against whom we should be particularly on our guard:—I mean the pernicious herd of unbelievers. They speak evil of what they do not understand; they reject what all the wise and the worthy have cordially received, and they wish *us* to be partakers of their licentiousness and folly. They madly despise the denunciations of God; they would have us despise them too, and they try to flatter us with the hope of escaping with impunity. It was by this very device which they employ, that Satan gained his advantage in paradise, and his constant language to sinners still is—"ye shall not surely die."—

'But to such an infernal wile, let us not listen for a moment; but put on the whole armour of God, resist and rise to heaven, overcome, and live for ever.' * 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.'

From this doctrine of the Fall, LET US LEARN ALSO, TO THINK DULY OF THE BANEFUL EFFECTS OF SIN.—O Sin! what hast thou done! What ruin hast thou spread among our race! By thee, man, who once stood so high in the favour of God, is now sunk low indeed, and without redemption, must sink lower still;—sink into the fathomless abyss of misery. May we sorrow then for sin after a godly sort, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. O that our head were waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night for our transgressions!

LET US BE DEEPLY IMPRESSED WITH A SENSE OF THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF HOLINESS.

* James 1:12.

ness. While the angels who fell, continued holy, they were happy; but as soon as they fell, they became miserable. And while our first parents continued holy, they too were happy; they enjoyed Eden with all its riches and glory; but when they sinned, they were immediately covered with shame, and felt themselves obnoxious to punishment. God expelled them "the garden of "Eden, and placed at the east of it, cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned "every way to keep the way of the tree of "life."—If then we would ever be happy, let us be holy. This is the commandment of God—"Be ye holy, as I am holy."

FINALLY, LET US EMBRACE WITH ARDENT GRATITUDE, THE PROFFERED SALVATION OF JESUS CHRIST.—"Christ is all in all," and without him we must perish. There is no other name but the name of Christ, by which we can be saved. Christ came into the world to free us from the curse, to seal to us the remission of our sins, to quicken us from spiritual death, and to raise us to a higher and happier life, than even that which we have forfeited. Let us not neglect then so great salvation; but pray

without ceasing that we may be accepted through Jesus ; “ be made kings and priests “ unto God, purified as his peculiar people, “ zealous of good works,” and received, at last, into his immediate presence, where there is “ fulness of joy and pleasures for “ evermore.” Our state shall then be more glorious than it is possible for the tongue to express, or even the mind to conceive.— We shall eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life, in the paradise of God : “ And there “ shall be no more curse, but the throne of “ God, and the Lamb shall be in it, and “ his servants shall serve him ; and they “ shall see his face, and reign with him for “ ever and ever *.”

CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE.

GENESIS VI. 5.

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, is only evil continually.

WHILE man continued in the state in which God created him, he was perfectly innocent, and consequently happy. All was harmonious and serene: no pain afflicted his body; no wrong thought ever entered into his mind; all “the imaginations of the “thoughts of his heart” were continually holy. But in this state of honour and happiness, man did not continue. There was a certain tree in the garden in which God had placed him, the fruit of which he

was forbidden to taste ; and this restriction was intended as a pledge of his subjection, and an exercise of his obedience. If he continued obedient, he was to have glory, and honour, and immortality ; but if he should be disobedient, he was to become subject to ruin and death,—to incalculable misery.—He became disobedient, and, in one moment, lost his uprightness and his happiness together. He incurred all that is included in that awful penalty,—“ In the “ day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely “ die.”—And his mortal sin did not affect himself only ; but likewise all his posterity. Sorrow, in numberless forms, has, ever since, been in the world, and sin which is the cause of sorrow. Instead of being bright with knowledge, and amiable with virtue, human nature is now sunk in ignorance and bloated with vice. Let us observe what passes around us; let us observe also, what passes within us, and then, doubtless, this is the mournful conclusion that will be drawn :—“ The wickedness of “ man is great in the earth, and every ima- “ gination of the thoughts of his heart (be- “ fore he is converted by divine grace) is “ only evil continually.”

This view of human nature is, I know, very different from that given by heathens, and even by many who call themselves Christians. The heathens, generally, represented man as naturally disposed to goodness, and as capable, by his own exertions, of rising to the sublimest height of moral excellence. And strange as it may seem, there have been, and there still are many who "name the name of Christ," and with the Bible in their hands, venture to hold similar language. This, perhaps, never obtained more, at any time, than in the present century, and never more in any part of the world, than in our own country. Many, both divines and moralists, hold up, what they call, "the fair side of "human nature," and if they allow any thing wrong at all, they do not choose to give it the offensive name of *sin*; but smooth it over with the softer name of *frailty* or *imperfection*. Now, if such a representation be just, men have suffered little or nothing from the fall of our first parents; but are still, as at the beginning, only "a "little lower than the angels." Suppose then, for a moment, that we are ready to admit this representation, what must we do

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with our Bibles? They too, like most things here below, must submit to change: we must expunge from them, for ever, this, and all similar passages;—“the wickedness “of man is great in the earth, and every “imagination of the thoughts of his heart, “is only evil continually.” But whatever others do, let us hold fast the form of sound words. Let us believe that God is true, though every man should be made a liar. Now, this representation is not the representation of man, but of God.—Let us, therefore, state more particularly the evidence which we have for believing it.—We can adduce our evidence from the Scriptures, from all History, and from Experience.

The doctrine now to be discussed is not one of those light things which we may believe, or not believe, at our pleasure. If we do not believe, and be not deeply impressed with a sense of the depravity of human nature, we cannot embrace, and believe, as we ought to do, the Gospel of “God “our Saviour.” Without believing that there is disease, we shall never apply for a remedy.

First, let us consider what evidence we have, from the *Scriptures*, for believing in the depravity of human nature.—We cannot open the Sacred Volume, without finding evidence of this woful fact meeting us in, almost, every page. Before Adam himself was depraved, the sacred historian informs us, that he was *in the Divine likeness*. But when recording events posterior to the Fall, he varies his style, and when speaking of Adam having a son, remarks, that he begat him, not *in the Divine*, but *in his own likeness*:—and that the most careless reader might advert to the melancholy change, Moses marks it by an emphatical repetition: he adds, *after his image*. “Adam lived an “hundred and thirty years, and begat a “son in his own likeness, after his image*,” in contradistinction to the image of God, after which he himself was created. The phrase appears still more striking, when we recollect, that this is affirmed, not of Cain, but of Seth, the most excellent of Adam’s children, and *the father of the holy seed*. Does it not imply, that in consequence of the Fall, *every child of Adam is the heir*

of corruption? It unquestionably does, and accordingly we find this original corruption spreading with the human race; infecting the heart and polluting the practice of every mere man, without one single exception. Even prior to the flood, we find Almighty God himself declaring, "that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually:— And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart *."—This, I confess, is a gloomy picture of the human mind; but though a gloomy, it cannot be an unjust one. No, for it came from that Hand which painted the canopy of heaven, and touched all the pictures of nature into such inimitable perfection.

But lest this account of mankind should be thought to have no reference, but to the generation then existing, we find God repeating the charge, and bringing it forward against those also, who survived the deluge.—"I will not again curse any more the

"grounded for man's sake," for the imagination of man's heart is evil "from his youth":—that is, depravity cleaves to his nature; even judgments the most severe will not correct him; he will not learn righteousness; he is stubborn, and will go on in the error of his ways.—And the farther we proceed in the Bible History, we find the evidence of human corruption constantly accumulating. Israel is still prone to evil. Their whole history is a history of rebellion against the Lord.—"Ye have been rebellious against the Lord, since the day that I knew you," says Moses. They were, as holy Stephen expresses it, "stiff-necked" and uncircumcised in heart and ears, and "did always resist the Holy Ghost." Let us hear too, the sad confessions of even their most illustrious characters. What saith David? "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."—What saith Isaiah? "Woe is me! for I am un-done, because I am a man of unclean lips."—What saith Jeremiah? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"—And

let us remember the words of our Lord, Jesus Christ,—of him who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins. “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies.” And it is thus *divinely* accounted for:—“that which is born of the flesh, is flesh.” Like produces its like. We inherit corruption from our first parents. “In me, (declares Paul,) that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.”—“And you, (says he to the Ephesians,) bath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince, the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation, in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind. and were, by nature, the children of wrath. even as others.”—“There is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God *.” Who that duly con-

* Ps. li. 5. Is. vi. 5. Jer. xvii. 9. Matt. xv. 19. John iii. 16. Rom. viii. 18. Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3. Rom. i.i. 2. 23.

siders the passages now adduced ; who considers that they are parts of the Bible, and that the Bible is an inspired book, can deny, or even doubt, for a moment, the depravity of human nature * ?

But we admit this doctrine, not merely from the repeated declarations contained in the Bible, but also from that capital doctrine which runs through it, and for the sake of which its precious contents were revealed :—I mean the doctrine of our redemption by Jesus Christ. If we are not naturally depraved, why did Jesus Christ suffer and die, to regenerate and purify us, “a peculiar people, zealous of good works ?” If we are not naturally guilty and obnoxious to punishment, why is He represented as “redeeming us from the curse of the law,

“ Even the Heathens themselves were sensible of this depravity. One of the most eminent of them owns, that “ no man is born without vices ;” and another, that “ we are born liable to as many disorders of mind as of body.”

Nam quis natus sine nascitur.

Hor. Sat.

Hac conditione nati sumus, animalia obnoxia non paucioribus animi quam corporis morbis.

SENECA de I.

“ being made a curse for us?” If we are not naturally averse to our duty, and unfit for happiness, why did He die, as the Scriptures tell us, “ the just, for the unjust, to “ bring us to God?”—to incline our backward minds to what is our true interest, and thus make us meet for the heavenly inheritance?—But to enlarge farther on this head is unnecessary. We must give up the Bible as not worth being attended to, if we can deny the doctrine of human depravity.

SECONDLY, We can bring evidence of the truth of this doctrine, not only from the Scriptures, but also from all *History*. What is history but a lengthened record of follies and crimes? Deduct this disgraceful sum, and how very little will remain! For the truth of this, I appeal, not merely, to those nations which are called ignorant and barbarous; but even to those which have, confessedly, been the most enlightened and refined.—What was Rome? The theatre of jealousy, and ambition, and violence, and discord.—What was Greece? It was famed, we know, for its superior politeness and

wisdom, yet were even its inhabitants exceptions to the humbling doctrine with which we are now endeavouring to impress the mind?—Rivalry and discord, ignorance of the true good, neglect of religion, and flagrant violation of the rights of their fellow creatures are, (who can deny it?) indelible stains upon their history. “Professing themselves wise, they became fools.” Alas! to both Greeks and Romans, we may but too justly apply the stricture of the Apostle;—“they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and he gave them up to a reprobate mind.”—And what have those nations been whom God hath favoured more highly than even these—those nations who have been blessed with the revelation of the Gospel of Christ? Has *their* improvement in virtue, in good principles and good practice, borne any proportion to their invaluable privileges? Vices that would have disgraced the heathen, *they* have indulged in, without shame, and without remorse. They have been indifferent to the most affecting considerations, and resisted and contemned the most powerful motives: How little zeal for righteousness which exalteth a nation, and what fatal

propensity ; what parricidal eagerness to commit sin which is the disgrace and ruin of every people ! Behold in them, the inbred depravity of human nature ! They have enjoyed the light ; but they have "loved " darkness rather than light, because their " deeds were evil."

Sin then, it would seem, appears wherever men appear. It invariably springs up in every heart. It is not, as some would have us believe, the rare, casual production of the soil ; it is inbred, universal.—But if this is not strictly and uniformly true, let some glorious exceptions be produced. Where, I ask, was there ever found, a mere man who never harboured an evil thought, who never uttered an evil word, who was never guilty of an evil deed ; but who, in all his thoughts, and words, and deeds, proved himself perfectly innocent, and holy, and good ? Could there have been any one so audacious as to come forward and say,—“ I am the man,”—to such a one, well might it have been said,—“ Guilty “ fool ! out of thy own mouth, thou “ condemnest thyself. Thou couldst not “ hold such language. wert thou not

" really, what thou, presumptuously, dost
" boast that thou art : wert thou not both
" ignorant and wicked, were not the eyes
" of thy understanding fatally blinded, and
" thy wretched heart hard and insensible
" indeed.—God have mercy upon thy poor
" soul, and give thee both sight and feeling
" ere it be too late."—But to the honour of
human nature, there seldom or never, I be-
lieve, has such notorious presumption ex-
isted. He would not be fit to be reasoned
with, he must be mad, who could deny that
" we have all sinned and come short of the
" glory of God."

FINALLY, The depravity of human nature appears, not only from the Scriptures and from all History ; but likewise from Experience.—We have proceeded, but a few steps in the journey of life, before we meet with trouble. " Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." The complaints of the poor, the repinings of the discontented, the cries of the afflicted, and the groans of the dying are heard on every side. What is the world often, but a Bochim, a place of weeping, where sorrow comes after sorrow, faster than Job's messengers of evil ? Now,

is not, the existence of so much and so varied sorrow a plain and striking proof of our being all tainted with sin? Were we not all sinners, we should not all be thus subjected to suffering. "God is love;" and never afflicts, willingly, the children of men. But He afflicts us, and afflicts us, not only in consequence of our own sin, but in consequence of the sin also, of our first parents.

—Stand by the cradle of that dear afflicted little one; hear its doleful moans; see its last, mortal strugglings, and ask, whence this severe chastisement? The babe has no actual sin; why then does it suffer and die? Suffering and death are the consequence of sin. How then are we to solve the difficulty? Only by admitting this doctrine which is so authoratively delivered to us:—that by Adam's sin all his race, even the youngest, as well as the oldest, are materially affected. Here I pretend not to explain; the fact is evident, and cannot be accounted for, upon any other hypothesis. We daily see that the direful effects of the follies and crimes of parents are suffered by their hapless posterity; and why then, should we wonder, that, in a modified sense of the words,—“the iniquity of our prime-

“that parent should be visited upon his
“children.”

—And while we have experience of the effects of sin, we have also abundant experience of sin itself. Behold, how iniquity abounds! Shall I mention those crimes which affront the sun?—swearing, blasphemy, sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, channelling, and wantonness. Because of these, the land mourneth; and by these, “multitudes, which no man can number,” are daily courting disgrace, and plunging into irreparable ruin; while many, more decently corrupt themselves in wealth’s unwearied chase, in honour’s empty show, and pleasure’s thoughtless throng. All seem prone, by nature, to forget their true interest, to mind the things of earth more than those of heaven; in one word—to worship the creature, more than the Creator.—But are there not some, it may be said, who are even by nature, and without the grace of the Gospel, humane, amiable, and honourable, and who seem to have escaped the gross corruption, so much complained of, in the world? There, undoubtedly, are

But even such humane, amiable, and honourable persons, when tried by the Divine law, and brought to the test by Him who is unspotted holiness, will be found to be depraved likewise. Humane, amiable, and honourable as they are, they can forget God, be ungrateful for his love, live and die, without believing in "Jesus Christ whom " he hath sent," and without "observing all " things whatsoever he hath commanded." And are not those who act such a part, vile, depraved indeed?—What depravity, what perverseness, impatience, passion, does not the tender mother find even in her darling child? Even in that much-loved little one, she may see that we are all transgressors from the birth; that "we go " astray as soon as we are born.—There is "none who doeth good and sinneth not: " no, not one*."

* It is notoriously true, that to be convinced of the corruption of our nature, we need only observe little children. "Those perverse passions which afterwards in life break forth, and fill our houses with violence, appear then in embryo. What anger may you remark in their little breasts when enraged or contradicted! What obstinacy and self-will, do they show when under correction! What envy at favours done to others!"

The christian himself has mournful experience of sin. Even in his most sacred moments ; when his whole heart should be fixed upon God, he feels and laments his weakness and distraction. Though “ renewed in the spirit of his mind,” two opposite principles so struggle within him, that “ when he would do good, evil is present with him.”—“ O wretched man that “ I am ! (he is often forced to exclaim,) “ who shall deliver me from the body of this “ death ?”

If we seriously ponder what has been stated, can we any longer retain a doubt of our moral corruption.—Will any man have the hardiness to affirm,—“ I have made my “ heart clean : I am pure from my sin ?”

From the preceding induction of particulars then, we find that there has been none

And scarce have they begun to speak, but they begin to lie, and disingenuously and artfully, like *Adam*, seek to conceal their transgressions. So true it is that “ the wicked are estranged “ from the womb ; they go astray as soon as they be born, “ speaking lies.”

* Psal. Ixiii. 3.

without sin, the Son of God only excepted. And from sin being universal, we must infer that it is inbred; that the whole of it is not merely by slow degrees, *acquired*, (for then many would totally escape its pollution;) but *natural*; an evil necessarily arising from our present constitution.—That a thing is *natural*; when we find it to be *universal*, is an inference which we usually draw in other cases. I find that all men discover a propensity to take food; that they all discover a propensity to avoid pain, and pursue pleasure; and I infer that this propensity, from being *universal*, is not merely *acquired*, but *natural*. Did I see a particular species of trees always bearing a particular kind of bad fruit, however they were managed, and in whatever soil they were planted, I should then infer that it was *natural* for such trees to bear such fruit. Or to employ a more apposite illustration; if I saw a particular family uniformly afflicted with a particular disease; if the disease descended from father to son, from generation to generation, whatever might be the place of their abode, and whatever might be their circumstances, I should cer-

tainly infer that this particular disease was *natural* to this particular family ; that it was not *acquired* by accidental infection, but *inherent* in their constitution. May I not infer then, with equal justness, that the strong propensity to sin, so apparent in all our race, in all ages, in all places, and in all circumstances, is *natural* likewise. If our depravity is not *natural*, how is it *acquired*? —Is it by *education*? Ah ! how many children do we see, who have received a virtuous education, become as bad as those who have received a vicious one ! How many parents, after all their wisest and kindest efforts, have reason to exclaim with the great Parent of the universe, “ What “ could have been done more to my vine-“ yard that I have not done in it ? Where-“ fore, when I looked that it should “ bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild “ grapes* ? ” —And if not by, what we com-
monly call, education, is it then wholly ac-
quired by *example*? To account for it by
example, would be accounting for depravity,
by depravity itself. How come depraved

* Isaiah v. 4.

and depraving examples to be so prevalent ; and how come we to be so apt to receive their baneful influence ? Were there not something radically wrong, we should not be so strongly and invariably inclined to follow what is evil, rather than what is good.—If our depravity then is not originally acquired either by *education*, or *example*, I still ask, how is it acquired ? Perhaps, some will say, being driven to this as their last resort, that it is acquired from *the frame and constitution of the world in which we live*. Our nature, it may be said, is, in itself, innocent and good ; but the world exhibits such scenes, and is full of so many and so strong temptations, and these have so powerful influence upon such weak creatures as we are, that the result is a propensity to sin and misery. But what is this but a full confession of the humbling truth which I am now endeavouring to establish. What is it but a full confession that we are much more inclined to yield to temptation than to resist it, and that we are totally unfit to act our part aright in the station assigned us by the Deity ? In other words, is it not justifying this language of inspiration ;—*the wickedness of man is great in the*

earth, and the imaginations of his heart are naturally, evil?

But here, the self-righteous may object, that granting that all mankind are depraved, and naturally depraved, yet can they be so much so, as they have now been represented?—I reply to this, that the goodness of a moral being, is the sum total of all the moral qualities which should belong to that being; and as in the natural body, when one member suffers, the whole body suffers with it, so when one of those constituent qualities is either lost or impaired, the whole moral system is disordered. He who offends in *one* point, is guilty of *all*. He who contemns the authority of God in one instance, can never be said, while he does so, to hold it in due reverence, in any other. And if Divine grace prevent not, this moral disease must not only always exist, but increase. The corrupt heart can never regenerate itself: without the interposition of God, all its imaginations must continue to be 'evil' *.

* But here it may be said,—Is not this statement of the universal depravity of human nature inconsistent with the incon-

But surely man did not originally come, as he now is, from the hand of his Creator. A good God could not have made him originally evil. Accordingly, the Scriptures tell us that He made him good; in his own image, adorned with knowledge; and righteousness, and holiness. But Adam rebelled against God, lost his primeval innocence and glory, subjected himself to punishment, and with himself, all his offspring. Is this

controvertible opinion of the best and most enlightened men who, from their enlarged views of the Divine goodness, and their just estimate of the human character, maintain that there is not only more *happiness* than *misery* in the world; but likewise more *virtue* than *vice*?—To this, I answer, that the inconsistency is only apparent, for there may be more virtue than vice in the world, and yet, commonly speaking, more vicious than virtuous *characters* in it.—Moral character is the sum total of moral habits; and for a character to be accounted virtuous, *all* the habits must be on the side of virtue, whereas to make a character be reputed vicious, though not perfectly so, only *one* vicious habit is necessary.—In the worst character the number of virtuous actions greatly exceeds that of vicious ones. For instance, the greatest liar speaks truth much oftener than falsehood, and the most cruel character acts kindly than he does cruelly.—Hence, it is abundantly evident, that there may be more *virtue* than *vice* in the world, and that notwithstanding this, the number of vicious *characters* may vastly preponderate over the virtuous ones.—This explanation, I trust, will give, to the considerate, complete satisfaction.

to many a stone of stumbling; and a rock of offence? It is so, without reason. We must, doubtless, suppose, if we believe in the infinite benevolence of Deity, that the evil introduced by the Fall was permitted for the ultimate eduction of the greatest possible good. Accordingly, the fall of Adam was immediately followed by the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. Without entering then, at present, into any abstruse reasoning on this head, let us, at once, admit this plain, scriptural solution of the difficulty.—“ Where sin abounded, “ grace did much more abound. As in “ Adam, all die, so in Christ shall all be “ made alive. As by one man, sin entered “ into the world, and death by sin, so the “ grace of God hath abounded unto all “ men, through Jesus Christ.” Thus, are the woful effects of the Fall, to be more than countervailed by a universal and glorious remedy.

Besides, let it be sufficiently remarked, that this transmission of sin, this entailed disaster in the moral world, is in perfect harmony with what we daily observe in the natural

world... How often do we see the prodigality and vice of the parent entail poverty and disease both upon himself and his posterity, in the very same manner, as Adam's disobedience has made us sinners and obnoxious to misery ! With what reason, then, can the doctrine of hereditary corruption be ever urged, exclusively, as an objection to the truth of Revelation ? Men, vain, and ambitious to be " wise above what " is written," may dispute and cavil against this doctrine, as long and as keenly as they please, but their disputation and cavils can never annihilate the fact, that we are all naturally sinners, and disposed to trifle with our dearest, our everlasting interests.—Sin, like an inveterate disease, rankles in our frame ; instead then of disputing and cavilling, wisdom bids us haste to the great Physician of souls, resign ourselves into his hands, and, with humility and faith, implicitly follow his divine directions.—Sin is the ruin of our nature ; it is a mad attempt to defeat the purpose of God, and disturb the peace and order of the universe. While then we continue in sin, we are enemies to God ; and how awful, to be in a state of

infinity to Him ! We are, every moment, exposed to all that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which he hath threatened against every soul that doeth evil. What, then, shall we do to be saved ? Let us believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall be saved ; let us be fully convinced of our own sins, and of his excellence ; let us cordially receive the glad tidings of mercy which he hath brought ; and we shall never perish ; all our iniquities shall be blotted out ; we shall be made pure in heart ; we shall see God, and inherit eternal life.

Christian ! thou who hast seen the malignity of sin, and hast often wept for it, in secret, before God, be not discouraged. That precious "blood of sprinkling," to which thou hast applied, will soon cleanse thee from every stain. Once thy wickedness, too, was great in the earth, and the imaginations of thy heart evil ; and still thou groanest, being burdened with the sad remains of sin within thee ; but keep the faith ; be patient and endure unto the end, and when "He who cometh quickly shall come," thou shalt be completely holy and

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completely happy. Angels shall “ joy over
“ thee with singing :” Christ himself “ shall
“ see of the travail of his soul, and be satis-
“ fied” in “ the glory that shall be reveal-
“ ed” in thee :—a glory great as the extent
of thy capacity, and lasting as the days of
immortality.

THE NATURE OF THE LAW, AND OF SIN THE TRANSGRESSION OF IT.

1 JOHN III. 4.

Sin is the transgression of the law.

THE Apostle John, in addressing his Christian brethren, exhorts them, with much earnestness and affection, to beware of every thing that might lead them to the commission of sin. For this purpose, he reminds them of the dignity of their present character, and the magnificence of their future hopes.—“ Beloved, now are we the “ sons of God, and it doth not yet appear “ what we shall be ; but we know that when “ He shall appear, we shall be like him, for “ we shall see him as he is.”—But how in-

consistent are the Christian's dignified character and elevated hope, with the commission of sin ! He who is now a son of God, and hopes, one day, to dwell with Him and enjoy Him for ever, ought, surely, to purify himself, even as God is pure. But sin, the Apostle adds, is not only inconsistent with Christian character and hope, it is also a daring rejection of the Divine authority. " Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth " also the law, for sin is the transgression " of the law."

But though these words of John had, primarily, a reference only to Christians, they may form a subject of meditation profitable to all. All are indispensably bound to abhor sin, and love the law, of which sin is the transgression. All, naturally, seek happiness, and avoid misery ; but we cannot avoid misery, without avoiding sin, for sin infallibly subjects to misery. And why has sin this pernicious power ? Because it is rebellion against God ; because it is " the transgression of his law."

Let us now consider, FIRST, The nature of the Divine Law ; SECONDLY, The nature

and demerit of sin, which is the transgression of it; and THEN, The improvement to be derived from the subject.

FIRST, Let us consider the nature of the Divine Law.—Law, when founded on wisdom and goodness, may be defined, an authoritative institution, claiming the strict observance of all those to whom it is made known, and designed for their improvement and happiness. Now, the laws which God, who possesseth infinite wisdom and goodness, hath given to his creatures, are of three kinds;—the *judicial*, the *ceremonial*, and the *moral* law.—The judicial law was given to regulate the civil polity of the Jews; the ceremonial law, to regulate their ablutions and sacrifices; in one word, all their religious rites and observances. The moral law, again, which is the law now to be explained, has for its subjects no particular nation, to the exclusion of any other; it addresses itself both to Jew and Gentile; it is founded on the nature of man and the constitution of things, and will be felt binding, while there is a mind to perceive and a conscience to judge. It was delivered on Mount Sinai, and it is written, in more or less legible

characters, by the finger of God, on every human heart. It is contained in the ten Commandments which are recorded in the book of Exodus; it is urged by the prophets, and explained, extended, and enforced in the gospel of Christ. What it requires, are sobriety, righteousness, and godliness. “The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world *.” Indeed, all that the law requires, may be comprehended in one word,—
LOVE. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: This is the first, and great commandment; and the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets †.” To feel and cherish genuine and unbounded love, is to perform all our duty. “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him ‡.”

* Titus ii. 11, 12.

‡ 1 John i. 16

† Matt. xxii. 37, 38, 39, 40, 41.

God beholds him with delight, and keeps him as the apple of his eye ; for such a man is the image of God, and reflects the splendour of his moral glory.—Nothing can be more comprehensive or valuable than love. It is the end of the commandment, and "the fulfilling of the law." But if our love fail, in the least, either in degree or extent, we do not fulfil the law ; but transgress it, and such transgression, necessarily subjects the transgressor to punishment. The law makes no provision for guilt, and, from its very nature, cannot tolerate even the slightest defect. It requires us to fulfil it in every respect,—and to fulfil it from the heart, and to persevere in fulfilling it.—The law of God requires nothing short of perfect obedience : it does not, like human laws, extend only to outward conduct ; it extends even to our thoughts and intentions ; and, like its Divine Author, it is without shadow of change.

The law of God requires perfect obedience. Could we suppose that it admitted any thing less, we must suppose that it admits the violation of itself. We must suppose that it requires obedience, and yet counte-

nances disobedience, that is, that it is weak, contradictory and absurd, and consequently, any thing but the law of God.—Again, God the Lawgiver, is infinitely excellent, and therefore entitled to all our regard; to all the fervour of our hearts, and all the service of our lives. To withhold from Him, then, any, even the least, portion of this regard, is to withhold from Him his due; and to suppose Him admitting this, is to suppose Him admitting what is wrong; admitting sin which “is the transgression “of His law,” which is contrary to His nature, and abominable in His sight.—Recollect too, that God is infinitely good, and must, therefore, have originally designed his children for perfect happiness. The law, then, which He gave them, must have required perfect obedience, (and it still requires it, for it has never been repealed,) because nothing short of perfect obedience is competent to the design of producing perfect happiness. All beings, from the Almighty Father himself, to the least, and lowest of his intelligent offspring, are happy, in exact proportion, as they are holy.” As He then, who is infinite goodness, could not but originally design his creatures to be perfectly

happy, that is, as happy as their natures would allow; perfectly free from pain, and receiving pleasure without alloy; He must have required them to be perfectly holy; in other words to yield perfect obedience to His holy law. To suppose him to accept less, would be supposing Him to design men for *perfect* happiness, and *imperfect* happiness, I may say *misery*, at one and the same time. But who does not repudiate this, as the grossest and most impious contradiction? We may sooner suppose any absurdity; a kingdom, for instance, divided against itself, and yet that kingdom stand, or Satan to cast out Satan, and yet his kingdom stand, than suppose a perfect God to give a perfect law, and yet require only *imperfect* obedience to it; or to design his children for perfect happiness, and yet require only that, which, when yielded, necessarily prevents the enjoyment of it.—Now this, though it may seem to be a severe doctrine, is in strict harmony with, even, the requisition of human laws. They too, require *perfect* obedience. Though we obey them, in numberless instances, yet if we fail in but one point, we become transgressors and obnoxious to punishment.—If we examine,

we shall find this doctrine, to be in strict harmony likewise, with our own individual sentiments. Are we not so constituted, as to find ourselves entitled to expect, in the common relations of life, a species of *perfection* from our fellow-men? Have we not reason to expect a Judge to be *perfectly upright*; a servant to be *perfectly honest*; a friend to be *perfectly faithful*; and a child to be *perfectly dutiful*; and when any of these characters, respectively, is *not perfectly upright, perfectly honest, perfectly faithful, perfectly dutiful*; are we not offended with them, and do we not impute, to them, *blame*?—And why? Because, we naturally feel, that the law, by which we estimate their characters, demands *perfection*.

Thus our position, that the Divine law, demands *perfect obedience*, is justified even by the conclusions of reason. What then is the language of Revelation? Is any certain degree of transgression, allowed thee, O man! in the book of God? Does it allow thee to be guilty of impurity, of blasphemy, or perjury, to a certain degree? No. It commands thee, to “crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, and to per-

"fect holiness in the fear of the Lord." Does it allow thee to indulge in malice, or anger, or envy, or lying, to a certain degree? No. It commands thee to "put away from thee, all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, with all malice." And it commands thee to abstain, not only from all evil; but even from the appearance of it; to follow His steps who knew no sin, and who had "no guile found in his mouth." It commands thee to be "perfect even as thy Father in Heaven is perfect."

And while the law of God requires *perfect* obedience, it does not, like human laws, extend only to the outward conduct, it extends even to our thoughts and intentions. Outward conduct, however good in itself, cannot be good in regard to him who maintains it, if it do not proceed from a good motive. Nay, though good in itself, it must be considered as actually bad, in regard to the individual, if it arise from un-hallowed intention. It is the goodness of the motive only, that can sanctify our actions, the best of which, separate from this, can, properly speaking, have no moral ex-

cellence. Unless good conduct be produced by good disposition, we cannot depend on its *continuance*; and this, perhaps, is the simple reason, why, in our estimate of moral character, we always think it necessary to take the latter in such strict connection with the former.—The law of God, then, must reach, not only *outward actions*; but, also, the *temper of mind*, from which they originate, and which characterizes them, in relation to the agent, as either good or bad. Human laws, indeed, take cognizance only of outward actions, because human legislators can have no access to the heart; but God knows the heart, and the most secret thought which can ever rise there. The mere external forms of devotion cannot be acceptable to Him. He cannot be deceived by the treacherous smile, the unfeigned thanksgiving and the mimic prayer. He penetrates the inmost recesses of the human breast; He discerns the exact correspondence between the heart and the countenance, the thoughts and the professions; and His displeasure cannot but be excited by the unmeaning oblations of a counterfeited piety. This great God, then, who ~~doth~~ parcheth the hearts of the children of men,

must require the heart, to enliven every work which we do, and to make grateful, every offering which we bring.—“ My son, “ (says he,) give me thine heart.—If we “ regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will “ not hear us.—Who shall ascend into His “ hill, and who shall stand in His holy “ place? , He that hath not only clean “ hands, but a pure heart.—God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him, must worship “ Him in spirit and in truth.” .

And while the moral law requires perfect obedience, and extends not only to our outward conduct, but even to our thoughts and intentions, it is, also, like its Divine Author, *without shadow of change*. The transcript of Himself, it is immutable and eternal.—“ It is easier, (declares the Book of God,) “ for heaven and earth to pass away, than “ for the least title of the law to fail.” —“ The carnal mind,” I know, rises up in enmity against this doctrine : it vainly attempts to persuade itself, that this law, in its full rigour, God will never execute ; that its severity is now softened ; that since the coming of Christ it is even repealed, and a milder law substituted in its stead,

requiring only sincere, though imperfect obedience, and declaring that all who yield this, shall, therefore be accepted, and enter into life. Vain device of the carnal mind, which may, for a season, lull the conscience asleep; but which has no foundation in truth, and will not stand in the judgment! — The law cannot be repealed; and, at any rate, the idea of such a repeal as is here pled for, the least reflection will not suffer us to admit.

The moral law, I say, cannot be repealed. It results, necessarily, from our constitution, and from the relation in which we stand to God, and to one another. While, then, our natures, and these relations continue, the law resulting from them, must continue also. Can there ever be a time, when it shall cease to be our duty, to love God, *supremely*, and to love *sincerely and ardently*, our fellow creatures, and to “do good to them, as we have opportunity?” Can there ever be a time, when, it shall cease to be our duty, to do *all* that we *ought* to do? Then, and not till then, can we expect any repeal of the Divine law.

At any rate, the idea of such a repeal, as is here pled for, the least reflection will not suffer us to admit. According to this idea, perfect obedience is dispensed with, and sincere, though imperfect, obedience, is now accepted as

ing into life.—But what is sincere, though imperfect obedience? It must mean something short of what is perfect: But how much short? Is it one half, or one quarter, or one fiftieth, or one hundredth part of my duty, or what is it? A condition, and, especially, the condition of my salvation, must be precisely defined, else, I can never know when I perform it, or when I fail in performing it. But the phrase, *sincere, though imperfect obedience*, is something vague and indeterminate indeed, and having no tendency but to give loose reins to the sensual appetite, to erect a strong hold for the deist, to embolden the profligate, and make the holy law of God “of none effect.” While other false doctrines will slay a thousand, this most pernicious one will slay ten thousand. It cannot be too amply refuted, or too strongly reprobated.

Besides, if sincere though imperfect obedience be all that is now requisite, then this obedience ceases to be *imperfect*; it is by supposition, all that this new remedial law demands; and when yielded, the law is, therefore, satisfied, and consequently, the obedience is *perfect*.—Thus, it appears, that this imaginary law converts *imperfection* itself into *perfection*; that is, that it is full of absurdity and contradiction.—Upon the whole, it is evident, that such a new law, supposed to be introduced by Christ, tolerates, and even sanctions what is wrong, and so makes “Christ the minister of sin,” though He “knew no sin,” but came for the express purpose of abolishing sin.

The law of God, then, is holy, and just, and good, and can, never be repealed.—It requires *perfect obedience*; it does not, like human laws, extend only to *outward conduct*; it extends even to our *thoughts and intentions*; and like its Divine Author, it is *without shadow of change*.

Such is the nature of the Divine law; let us now consider, **SECONDLY**, the nature

and demerit of sin which is the transgression of it. Here, we should give all possible attention and seriousness, for, in proportion to the sense which we have of the nature and demerit of sin, will be our anxiety to avoid it, and to embrace the means appointed by God, to deliver us from its pollution and its punishment.—If the law of God is an authoritative institution, claiming the strict observance of all those to whom it is made known, and designed for their improvement and happiness, then we are guilty of sin, whenever we neglect this law, attempt to resist its authority, or overlook any thing, tending to make us wise, and good, and happy. Does the law require perfect obedience, and not like human laws, extend only to outward conduct; but even to our thoughts and intentions; and is it, like its Divine Author, *without shadow of change*? Then we are guilty of sin, when we are chargeable, even, with the least defect; when the heart does not mingle with the sacrifice; when love does not prompt our offering; when we do not persevere too, in what is right; when we “continue not in all things which are written “in the book of the law to do them.” We

are guilty of sin, both when we venture to do what we ought not to do, and also when we forget, or leave undone, what we ought to do. In either of these cases, how great is our demerit! What degradation and misery, do we not deserve!—To be duly impressed with a sense of this, let us consider, against Whom sin is committed; the humiliation and sufferings appointed, and submitted to, in order to atone for it, and the dreadful consequences which still result from it.

To be duly impressed with a sense of the evil of sin, let us, *first*, consider against Whom it is committed.—It is committed against God, and, therefore, its demerit is infinite, that is, it subjects us to an infinite, an unmeasurable punishment. This, I think, is demonstrably evident.—Sin is the breach of an obligation; in other words, it is doing something contrary to what we ought to do; and the greater the obligation which is broken, the greater, in exact proportion, must be our guilt. But our obligation to love and honour any being, is great, in proportion, to the loveliness and excellence of that being. We are, surely,

under a greater obligation, to love and honour a being more lovely and excellent, than one less lovely and excellent. It follows then, that if a being be infinitely lovely and excellent; (and God is that Being,) we are under an infinite obligation to love and honour Him: And if our guilt increases with our obligation, then when we fail to love and honour Him, we contract infinite guilt; we subject ourselves to incalculable punishment.

But it may be said, does not this reasoning lead to an absurd conclusion? Does it not confound all our notions of guilt by making all sins equal, the least as well as the greatest; because all are committed against an infinite God?

I answer, that we do maintain that all sins, from the obligation of the sinner to obedience; necessarily subject him to infinite or incalculable punishment. However formidable the difficulties which meet us here, we cannot but admit this, for the reasoning is direct and conclusive. But when we affirm that all sins subject to infinite or incalculable punishment, we mean

that the punishment is infinite or incalculable only in one respect—in respect of continuance. Though the same in this one respect—its continuance,—future punishment will and must vary in another,—its degrees of *intenseness*. Its *duration*, in every case, may be the same, while its *severity* may be very different.—Every sin, and especially every habit of sin, to say the least of it, produces eternally injurious consequences. The sinner is eternally retarded in the path of improvement and happiness; or in other words, every sin he commits, makes his condition eternally worse than it would, otherwise, have been.—Hence appears, plainly, the *infinite* evil of every sin, and the absurdity and impertinence of the objections that have been, often so triumphantly made to the possibility of the *infinite* duration of its direful effects.—Though, in one view, every sin is an *infinite* evil, yet it does not follow, that the evil, in every case, and in all respects, is precisely the same.—We see then, that the above reasoning, by no means confounds our notions of guilt, by making all sins, the least as well as the greatest, issue, as the objection supposes, in exactly the same penal consequences.

Again, shall it be said, that if from God's being infinitely great and excellent, our sins, therefore, have infinite guilt; then it will follow, that our obedience, for the same reason, ought to have infinite value ?

I answer ; the very reverse seems to be true, for though our guilt increases with our obligations, the value of our obedience diminishes, in the same proportion. This will appear evident, by adducing a plain, familiar example.—I am more bound to be just, and pay my lawful debts, than to be charitable and relieve my necessitous neighbours. Yet in the former case, my conduct is less valuable than in the latter.—How ? Merely from my being under a much greater obligation to be just, than to be generous.—If then, the merit of our obedience, instead of *increasing*, *decreases*, in proportion to the greatness of our obligations, it follows, that the merit of our obedience to God, to whom our obligations are infinite, must be infinitely little ;—that is, we can have no merit at all. But if we dare to withhold this obedience, our guilt, like our obligation, is infinite, it passes all bounds ; we justly expose ourselves to that misery

which is said to be prepared for the devil and his angels. "It is impossible; fully to conceive what it is to sin against God, to set up our own wills against His, to violate the order of the world, to transgress the law of the universe." Shall I not visit for "these things," saith the Lord. "And who "knoweth the power of his anger?—Ac- "cording to his fear, so is his wrath."

The vast demerit of sin appears also from the humiliation and sufferings appointed, and submitted to, in order to atone for it.—God abominated was sin to God, that when it entered into the world, it was necessary, either that the sinner should perish, or that the Son of God Himself, should become our ransom!—Accordingly, in the fulness of time, astonishing to be told! he was made "manifest in the flesh;" and became "a man of sorrows and acquainted "with grief." To finish the work of our salvation, "he was oppressed and he was "afflicted;" and died, at last, an accursed death.—If we would see, then, the evil of sin, let us consult his tragic history!

—Yet how many live, as if religion was no concern of theirs!—as if there was no God; no judgment; no heaven: no hell.—They may, sometimes, have their convictions that all is not right; they may, sometimes, have their fears, that “sin shall not pass unpunished,” and that as *they* are sinners, their state is awfully dangerous; but soon again, they stifle their convictions; dismiss their fears; lull their consciences asleep, and flatter themselves, that however iniquitous their conduct, “the Lord will not ‘see; the Lord will not regard it.’” “But ‘be not deceived, God is not mocked; ‘whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he ‘also reap.—To them, who by patient con-“tinuance in well-doing, seek for glory, “and honour, and immortality, eternal “life; but unto them that are contentious, “and do not obey the truth; but obey un-“righteousness, indignation, and wrath, tri-“bulation, and anguish.”—“The wages of “sin is death.”—Let us all then fly from sin, as we would fly from destruction, and follow Jesus, who alone can cleanse us from its pollution and free us from its guilt. “Let the wicked forsake his way, “and the unrighteous man his thoughts,

" and let him return unto the Lord, and
" He will have mercy upon him, and to our
" God, for He will abundantly pardon." Sianer, return then, and plead for pardon and " eternal life." Return, and linger not in the territories of destruction. Mercy calls upon thee, and refuse not the call of mercy. Escape, before the long night set in, and the thick darkness overwhelm thee. Come penitent, to God, and let this be thy humble, ardent prayer—" Lord, cast me " not away from thy presence ! be merciful " to my unrighteousness, and my sins, and " iniquities; remember no more ! I am, " indeed, unworthy ; but worthy is the " Lamb that was slain !—O through, Him, " may, even, I be accepted and blessed, " and obtain an inheritance among them " that are sanctified !"

Let this subject ALARM ALSO THE HYPOCRITES. Brethren, " The wages of sin is " death," and however you may impose upon others, or even upon yourselves, remember, I beseech you remember, that your sins are not blotted out. You talk, indeed, much and loud about religion; but it is mere talk: you are not " transformed by the renewing of your mind."

You make a blazing profession; but you bring forth none of "the fruits of the spirit." You have neither righteousness, nor mercy, nor faith. You have the form of godliness; but you never felt its power. Your character is more loathsome and abominable than even that of the profligate himself. You attempt to deceive, not only men, but God. You insult his omniscience, and bring a disgrace upon religion, which no other character can bring. How then, shall you stand in the judgment! Instantly, abandon your "refuge of lies;" renounce "the hidden things of dishonesty;" "repent, and believe the Gospel, and bring "forth fruits meet for repentance." Do this; if you wish the salvation of your souls; for God is a God of truth, and "the word hath gone out of his mouth,"—*the hope of the hypocrite shall perish.*—The wages of *his* sin, is death indeed.

But while this subject should rouse the careless, and alarm hypocrites, it should, likewise, **STIMULATE EVEN CHRISTIANS.**—Christians, you are blessed among men! Over you, sin hath lost its dominion. To you, "there is no condemnation—You are

"in Christ Jesus, and walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." But still, the remains of sin are within you; you have not, as yet, reached perfection. Be not, then, "high-minded, but fear," and guard against every temptation to evil.—"The wages of sin is death." You, however "shall never perish:" you are the heirs of "eternal life;" but remember, it is possible for you, by your blacksliding, to "grieve the Holy Spirit," and lower yourselves in the scale of existence.—Every sin, into the commission of which you suffer yourselves to be surprised, is a stain upon your character, and a diminution of your joy. Through all eternity, your *happiness* shall, exactly, correspond to your *holiness*. Hate, then, sin, the opposite of holiness, with an ever-growing hatred; be emulous of the highest bliss, and therefore, be "instant in prayer to the God of peace," that He may "perfect what is lacking in your faith;" that He may "sanctify you wholly, and preserve your whole spirit, and soul, and body blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you shall emerge in glory, to sorrow and die no more, but to enjoy "eternal life," EVERLASTING FELICITY!"

THE GIFT OF GOD, ETERNAL LIFE, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST:

ROM. VI. 23

The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

What astonishing folly is daily shown by the human race! They seem, too often, to be averse to every thing that is their true interest. They generally covet the approbation, and applause of man, while they as generally neglect the approbation and applause of God. But what are the approbation and applause of man, that they should engross our minds, and become almost the sole object of pursuit? Can they make us either truly great, or truly happy? Can they ward off the arrows of affliction, or

bail us from the arrest of death? But God, whom we too often neglect for "that which profiteth not," is an almighty and never failing Friend. He is not far off, when trouble is near. He is ever ready to bind up the broken heart and to heal the wounded spirit. He withdraws from all them, who ask in faith; nothing that is truly good. He gives them "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

" Of those who are carnally minded, and set their affections upon worldly objects, we may well ask,—“ What fruit shall you have in those things of which you have reason to be ashamed; for the end of those things is death?” But to those who are Christians, who are spiritually minded, and set their affections upon the things that are above, we may justly say—“ Hail, ye blessed of the Lord!”—The Lord is their shepherd, and they shall not want. He will lead them to the green pastures, and beside the still waters: his banner over them is love. He is a sun and a shield; He hath given them grace, and He will give them glory. They are the heirs of all that is included in the promise

of, " eternal life."—Yes, they may rejoice and be exceeding glad, for while "the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Let us now consider what this exceeding great, and precious gift includes: whence it originates, and what is the appointed medium through which it comes.

First, let us consider what this exceeding great, and precious gift includes.—It is "eternal life." The *death* denounced as "the wages of sin," evidently includes not only the separation of the soul from the body; but also its separation from God; its separation from the saving influence of his grace and truth here, and its separation from his blessed presence hereafter;—a separation which constitutes *hell*. The "life," therefore, which we are now considering, and which stands opposed to the "death" denounced, must have an equally extensive meaning. It must include deliverance not only from the power of temporal death; but also a revival from the grave of sin, of moral corruption, a resurrection into new-

ness of life; and the full enjoyment of this life, in all its perfection, in the kingdom of heaven.—As the *death* of the soul does not consist in the extinction of its being, but in the depravation of its powers and faculties; in the loss of its native pleasures, and the endurance of merited punishment; so its *life* does not consist merely in existence, but in the sanctification of all its powers and faculties, in its exercising them according to the will of God, in its bearing his image, being holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect.—This is the true life of the soul, and from this life only results a happiness suited to its nature. All those who are strangers to this life, the Scriptures represent as *dead*. They still live, indeed, in this material world; but their connexion with the spiritual world is dissolved; they neither breathe its desires, nor engage in its employments, nor experience its heavenly pleasures. “There is no “peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” They are wounded with a sense of guilt, and through fear of death, “the wages of “sin,” they are, “all their life time, subject “to bondage.” Every thing beyond death, wears an aspect of horrour. Nothing “re-

"walks not a fearful looking for of judgment; and fiery indignation." What shall then be their misery; we do not now know, "we cannot now conceive," said, "O God ! may none of us ever feel !"

But the Christian, he to whom is gifted "eternal life," need fear no evil. Even the king of terrors has nothing to appal his heart ; this last enemy, to him, is vanquished; for his iniquity is pardoned, and God is his gracious Father, his everlasting Friend. "Fear not, saith God; to go down to the grave ; I will go with thee; and bring thee up again.—O Death!" may the Christian therefore, triumphantly exclaim, "O Death ! where is thy sting ? O Grave ! where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Accordingly, the Christian endeavours to walk worthy of his blessed hope. Redeemed from his past vain conversation, he "walks not after the flesh, but after the spirit." The spirit helps his infirmities, scat-

ters his fears, dissipates his darkness, and keeps alive and operative in his mind, the belief of the truth. Happy man! the Holy Spirit fills him with peace and hope; to him "there is no condemnation;" "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made him free from the law of sin and death." Sin, indeed, often prevails against him, but he suffers only a temporary defeat: he is not finally overcome. He may stumble, but he soon recovers; he falls, but he shall never perish; for he is kept by the mighty power of God; "he is born again, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, which liveth and abideth for ever." The fruits which he brings forth, are love, and peace, and righteousness, and truth; and these beginnings of "eternal life" which he now feels and enjoys, shall, at last, be made perfect in the kingdom of his Father. Then the painful conflict, now endured, shall be finally over. Nature shall no longer revolt from the dominion of grace; every corruption shall be uprooted from the heart; every fear banished from the mind, and every enemy laid prostrate on the field. The saints have overcome, through the blood of the Lamb, and "are set down

"with Him on his throne, even as he overt
"came, and is set down with his Father on
"this throne. They then behold his face
"in righteousness, and are satisfied with
"his likeness. They see, even as they are
"seen, and know, even as they are known."⁴
The felicity thence arising, is unalloyed
with apprehension or pain; it is pure, and
perfect; and not only pure, and perfect,
but, ravishing! thought! it is eternal. Un-
like our present giddy joys, which are often
but the raptures of an hour stolen from sor-
row; this is an enjoyment of endless dura-
tion. The heavens shall pass away, the
elements shall melt with fervent heat, and
this great globe itself, with all its works,
shall be dissolved; but the felicity of the
righteous shall then be but just com-
mencing. And when millions of ages have
elapsed, and when ten thousand times ten
thousand millions more have gone, it shall
have suffered no diminution, but rather be
found to have been ever on the increase,—
fairer, brighter, nobler than at the begin-
ning. O! blessed Eternity! when faith can
draw aside the veil and look into thee, what
scenes rise to the astonished eye! We be-

hold joy above joy, and glory above glory, till the imagination is overcome, with the view, — is lost in the boundless contemplation.

This is, "eternal life," and when we consider what we now are, do we sometimes fear that it is too great; too angelic, for us to enjoy? — Does it seem a life to which it is almost, incredible, that mortals will be raised? — a gift too transcendent for sinners such as we are, ever to receive? We are, indeed, unworthy even of our present life, and deserving only of punishment; but from what we know of God, we have reason to believe that his gifts are not proportioned to our deserts, but to his own boundless munificence. Great and glorious then, as the gift of eternal life is, and unworthy as we are to receive it, it is, surely, not too great and glorious to be conferred by divine, infinite, goodness. — But the difference between what the Christian now is on earth, and what he may expect to be in heaven, has something analogous to it in the amazing difference of the states which he has passed through already. How great the difference between what he was, when a child, and what he was before being born!

How great, again, the difference between mere childhood, and full maturity ! He who once had no existence, passes into what scarcely deserves the name ; he became a helpless, unthinking mere breathing infant, and he is, now a wise, benevolent, and righteous man ;—bearing the image of God, and partaking of the nature of Jesus Christ. Let us duly consider the greatness of this change, and we shall be prepared to admit, as a doctrine consonant to reason, the reality of an unspeakably superior state, into which he shall be introduced by his last change, when he shall be delivered from all sin and sorrow ; when he shall be made perfect ; when he shall dwell with God ; when “this corruptible shall have “put on incorruption, and this mortal im-“mortality.”—But this is a doctrine, not only consonant to reason ; but confirmed by a well attested Revelation. The Holy Spirit hath declared, that “the gift of God “is eternal life,”—and “eternal life” is said to be what God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began.—“Father! “(said Jesus;) I will that they also, whom “thou hast given me, be with me, where I “am, that they may behold my glory, which

"thou hast given me."—They then, (the Scriptures assure us,) enter into fulness of joy, receive a kingdom which cannot be moved—an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

SECONDLY, after examining what this exceeding great and precious gift of God includes, let us next consider whence it originates. It is evidently the effect of grace, and not the reward of merit. It originates from pure and disinterested love. It is styled "the gift of God;" but were it, in any degree, the reward of merit, it would partake of the nature, not of a *gift*, but of a *debt*.—That it is wholly of grace, appears, whether we consider the *gift* itself, or *Him* who bestows it; or the *persons* on whom it is bestowed, or the express declarations of Scripture on the subject.

Let us consider the *gift* itself. It is "eternal life;" the glory and immortality of the heavens. Now, what man living can have a title to this? We enjoy even our animal life by mere favour. It is because God's tender mercies fail not, that we are not consumed. From what then, but

pure favour, but, unmerited and infinite mercy, can we receive what is incomparably more excellent,—spiritual and eternal life—the life of angels,—the highest and noblest life, with which a creature can be inspired?

Let us think also of *Him* who bestows this gift. It is God; He who is eternally independent and glorious, and the source whence all being flows. Now, who can merit from God? Can any creature “be profitable” to his Creator? Can his goodness extend unto him? For the air we breathe, for every good disposition we feel, for every hope, for every present and temporal enjoyment, we are all debtors to the unsearchable riches of His grace. But besides having temporal enjoyment, we are also, if Christians, the heirs of “eternal life.”

And what are *we*, to whom this wondrous grace is shown?—Sinful dust, and ashes; traitors to God, and enemies to Him by wicked works! Now, if God “chargeth even his angels with folly,” and if “the heavens are not clean in his sight,” what is man—“man

" who drinketh iniquity like water," that he should be accepted and saved; that he should inherit " eternal life ?"—Lord ! we receive all from thy boundless mercy ; and " not unto us ; not unto us, but unto Thee. " be the glory !"

And let us attend to the express declarations of *Scripture*.—" By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.—Not by works of righteousness which we have done ; but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. —Without me, ye can do nothing.—God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation.—It is your Father's good pleasure, to give you, the kingdom*."—Hard sayings these ! for the vain sons of Adam, who would always find something in themselves of which they may boast ; but faithful sayings ! which they must humble themselves to receive, if they would ever enter into life, and have an inheritance among them who are sanctified.

* 1 ph ii 9 Titus iii. 5. John vi. 5. 2 Thess ii. 13. Luke xii.

THIRDLY, as we have now seen, what this "gift of God" includes, and likewise whence it originates, let us next consider the appointed medium through which it comes: It "comes, " through Jesus Christ "our Lord." — God is love; he is infinitely good, and must therefore ever wish to communicate all possible happiness; but being, at the same time, infinitely righteous and wise, he can communicate happiness only in the best possible way. The way in which he communicates it, must vary according to the state and character of those who are designed to receive it. While the obedient receive it, in one way, the disobedient must, surely, receive it in another. When creatures have broken the divine law and become obnoxious to punishment, and if after all, they shall receive "eternal life;" there must, at the same time, be some signal expression given of the divine displeasure against their sin, so that, while mercy is shown, the rights of Deity may be vindicated, and the order of the divine government maintained. Now, this is precisely our case: We are all sinners, and

naturally obnoxious to punishment ; and though God loves us, and willeth not, that any of us should perish ; but that all should receive “ the gift of eternal life ;” yet we can receive it only through the sufferings and death, of “ Jesus Christ our Lord.” None but He, was qualified to appear in our behalf, to avert the threatened vengeance, to dissipate moral darkness, to abolish sin, and “ bring in an everlasting righteousness.” Accordingly when we were the prisoners of justice, the children of wrath and the heirs of hell, our gracious Father appointed Him as our ransom. The Son of God, willingly undertook our cause, and in the councils of heaven, said ;—“ Lo ! I come ; in the volume of thy book it is written of me ; I delight to do thy will.”—Accordingly, “ though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” yet that we might obtain “ eternal life,”—“ he made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death,

"even the death of the cross."—And he not only died, but rose again from the dead, to prove that his work was finished, that his sacrifice was accepted, and ascended up into heaven, that the Holy Comforter might come, to renew us in the spirit of our minds, and purify us even as he is pure.— Thus did he fulfil the law, magnify and make it honourable, and show God to be both just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly.—"O ! the depth of the riches, both "of the wisdom and knowledge of God !" Sin is thus punished, and yet the sinner is saved: death, "the wages of sin," is fully inflicted, and yet, "eternal life" is freely bestowed.—And while it is bestowed "through "Jesus Christ our Lord," we are required to receive it by faith,—believing all that Christ hath done and suffered on our account; trusting, with unsuspecting confidence, that "He is faithful who hath promised. If thou shalt confess with thy "mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe "in thine heart that God hath raised him "from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Who-

“ soever believeth in him, shall not perish,
“ but have everlasting life ! —the life of
angels, the eternal vision and enjoyment of
God. Resting on this sure foundation, the
believer may, at all times, have peace, and
“ abound in hope through the power of the
“ **Holy Ghost.**” —“ Behold, God is my sal-
“ vation, I will trust and not be afraid.
“ Nothing, neither death nor life, nor angels,
“ nor principalities, nor powers, nor things
“ present, nor things to come, nor height
“ nor depth, nor any other creature, shall
“ be able to separate me from the love of
“ **God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord,**—
“ I am now ready to be offered up, and the
“ time of my departure is at hand ; I have
“ fought a good fight, I have finished my
“ course, I have kept the faith : henceforth,
“ there is laid up for me a crown of righte-
“ ousness, which the Lord, the righteous
“ Judge will give me at that day ; and not
“ to me only, but unto all them also that
“ love his appearing. Jesus ! into thy
“ hands, I commit my spirit, for thou hast
“ redeemed me, O God of truth. How
“ great is the glory now to be revealed !

"How unspeakable is the gift of eternal life!"

Have we any reason to believe that we are the heirs of "eternal life?" Is this life the supreme object of our desire, and do we feel it already begun in our souls? Is it our earnest wish to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness? Are we indeed dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord? Are we animated by his love, and purified and comforted by the Holy Spirit? Are we quickened together with him, and do our hearts ascend; are our affections placed where he sitteth, at the right hand of God? Then, however poor and mean we may be in the eyes of the world; still we are rich, we are great indeed. We have a possession which the world knows nothing of. Silver and gold, we may have none; but we have what is infinitely preferable—spiritual treasures never to be exhausted. All things are ours which are worthy of an immortal mind. We are more than monarchs; we are the children of God, destined for heaven, assured of "eternal life."

· But how awful, how truly affecting the case of those, whose character is directly opposite; who are still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity; who are spiritually dead. They are not only without all the hopes and enjoyments of "eternal life;" but are continually liable to the vengeance of Almighty God. It is only because He is infinitely merciful, that they are not immediately consigned to hell. If their eyes were not blinded; if their consciences were not seared by him who ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience, they would "awake to righteousness and sin not." They could not, for an instant, delay their escape from "the wrath that is to come."—May the Holy Spirit open their eyes, alarm their consciences, and convince them "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment!" They would then become "new creatures,—turn unto God, and keep his commandments, and do them."—Ah! better we had never been born, if we be not "born again." Our present animal life, the only life which we have, if we be not born again, is not a bles-

sing but a curse. To make it a blessing, we must be "sanctified through the truth, "—yield ourselves unto God, and be "established in every good word and work. "—Awake then thou that sleepest; arise "from the dead.—Hear these words of our Lord—"look unto me and be saved."—Merciful being! He still bears with all thy rebellion and ingratitude, and invites, nay pleads with thee, to accept "the gift of eternal life."

Is this "gift of eternal life" really offered to us? It unquestionably is. May we, then, cordially receive it! May we be made like unto God, and be partakers of his happiness!—What gratitude should fill our hearts! How should we love him who hath thus loved us, and prepared for us this vast inheritance! Let us show our love by yielding to the motions of his spirit, and "observing all things whatsoever he hath commanded us." Let us go up through the world, in his strength, "girding up the loins of our mind, and building up ourselves in our most holy faith.—I pray

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“ God that our whole spirit and soul, and
“ body, be preserved blameless unto the
“ coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!—Now
“ unto him who is able to keep us from
“ falling, and to present us faultless before
“ the presence of his glory, with exceeding
“ joy; to the only wise God our Saviour,
“ be glory, and majesty, dominion and
“ power, both now and ever, Amen.”

THE
DIVINE EXCELLENCE OF CHRIST

PSALM XIV. 2.

Thou art fairer than the children of men

THE person who is the subject of the forty-fifth psalm, is, doubtless the Messiah. In support of this idea, we can quote no less authority than that of an inspired Apostle. Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, applies directly to the Messiah a very striking passage of this psalm, in order to prove him to be not merely a human, inferior nature; but one who was exalted, and divine. Evidently referring to the sixth verse of this psalm, the Apostle represents the Father as thus addressing

the Son :—“ Thy throne, O God ! is for
“ for ever and ever ; a sceptre of righteous-
“ ness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.” We
are surely justified, then, in applying to
him this laudatory ascription likewise,—
“ Thou art fairer than the children of
“ men.”

The sacred writers seem to travel round
the whole compass of language in quest of
words sufficiently expressive of the dignity
and worth of Jesus Christ. “ Rejoice
“ greatly, O daughter of Sion ; shout, O
“ daughter of Jerusalem ; behold thy king
“ cometh unto thee ; he is just and having
“ salvation.” To win our affections, as well
as excite our reverence, they, at other times,
represent him by more tender and familiar
names. He himself teaches us to regard
him, as our Friend. “ Ye are my friends,
“ if ye do whatsoever I command you.” He
is even our Brother. “ He is not ashamed
“ to call us brethren.” The Church is taught
to claim him as her Head, and Husband.
“ I have espoused you to one husband,”
says the Apostle, “ that I may present you
“ as a chaste virgin to Christ.—Thy Maker
‘ is thy husband ;—The husband is the

"head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church." But lest these names, primarily and strictly applicable only to men, should obscure his divinity, and lead us to consider him merely as human, the holy and elevated Psalmist declares his superior glory, and as if he saw Him whom his soul loved, and whom he was about to celebrate, just standing before him, he breaks out in this language of extatic admiration:—"Thou art fairer than the children of men;"—that is, in general, Thou art superior to every, even the most exalted creature; Thou art truly great, and holy, and pure, adorned with the indescribable effulgence of the Divine Nature.

Now to show that I am warranted to take this expression;—"Thou art fairer than the children of men," in this general sense of *pre-eminence*, it is necessary to consider only, how degrading indeed, it would be to the Messiah, to apply it merely to his *bodily* appearance. To give it a sufficiently dignified sense, we must apply it to the *mind* of the Man Christ Jesus, and to the Godhead with which it is united. Now what is the beauty of mind? Is it

not power, and wisdom, and goodness? And what is the deformity of mind? Is it not weakness, and ignorance, and vice? God is infinitely wise, and powerful, and good, and is therefore the "fairest" and most beautiful Being in the universe. Satan, on the contrary, is represented as having no goodness, and as having power and wisdom only to do evil; in one word, he is desperately wicked, and is therefore the foulest and most deformed being in the universe. Viewing beauty then, as applicable, chiefly at least, to spiritual existence, I cannot be thought to stretch too far these words:—"Thou art fairer than the children of men;" if I consider them as expressive, in general, of the idea of *pre-eminence*. Our Lord Jesus Christ is "fairer than the children of men;" He is unspeakably eminent above every human being, in all that can command our esteem, or excite our affection.—The pre-eminence of our Lord Jesus Christ is, at all times, an appropriate subject of meditation. In proportion to the high ideas which we entertain of him, will be the confidence, and comfort, and joy, which will fill our souls.—Let us consider then, FIRST, Whence

this pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, here declared by the Psalmist, appears; and, SIXTY-SECONDLY, What effect such a view of him should produce on our temper and practice.

Let us, FIRST, consider whence the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ appears.—It appears from the excellence of his person; and from the works performed by him.

It appears from the excellence of his person.—There is evidently a gradation of being in nature; one creature rises above another in excellence. A vegetable excels a stone, an animal excels a vegetable, a rational being excels a mere animal, and so on. This idea is preserved in Scripture: “there are celestial bodies, and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.” The Scriptures assign to man, a place *above* all other animals, and *below* angels.—“Thou hast made man ‘a little lower than the angels, thou hast put all other beings under his feet.’—Now Jesus Christ was a man; he was born of a woman; he was ‘made in the likeness of men, and appeared in the form of a ser-

"want*." But there never was such a man. Though he was man, yet he was superior to, or as St. Paul expresses it, he was "much better than the angels." He is mentioned even as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.—He is Immanuel,—God with us." Isaiah expressly calls him "the mighty God."—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God."—Thomas calls him, "my Lord and my God;" and he is commended for his faith,—John calls him, "the true God and eternal life," and extols his love to mankind by saying, "hereby

* The passages of Scripture in which Christ is represented as a *man*, and in which he is said to have been *born*, are often triumphantly produced by those who disbelieve his Divinity. But the enumeration of such passages can make nothing for their cause; for according to all opinions, Christ was truly a *man*, and is properly so called in the Scriptures. But is He represented as nothing more? Had He been called a *man*, and had it been added, that He was nothing more than a *man*, the doctrine of, what has been styled, His "simple humanity," would have been evident, and there could have been no room for controversy on the subject. But, to me, it appears, that the Scriptures plainly assert the very contrary.

" perceive we the love of God, because he
" laid down his life for us."—Paul says, he
was " God manifest in the flesh;" and af-
firms that " as concerning the flesh," he
sprang from the fathers of the Jewish na-
tion; but that, in another view, he "is
" over all, God blessed for ever."—What
shall I say more? Christ himself assumes
the incommunicable name of God, and thus
declares, " before Abraham was, I AM. All
" things whatsoever the Father hath, are
" mine—I and my Father are one.—No
" one knoweth the Son but the Father, nei-
ther knoweth any one the Father but
" the Son *."—And here, I confess, there
is contained a mystery which I cannot un-
derstand; but am I therefore hastily to
dismiss it from the articles of my faith?
The wisest of men do not understand any
one object in nature perfectly, and are they
therefore to believe nothing? They must
then disbelieve their own existence; for no
man perfectly understands even his own
being. " Great, indeed, is the mystery of

* Heb. i. 3. Matt. i. 23. Isa. ix. 6. John xx. 23. John
v. 26. Rom. ix. 5. John viii. 58. John xvi. 15. John x. 30.
Matt. xi. 27.

"godliness, God manifest in the flesh;" but still I must believe it, since it is contained in the Scriptures, and since I have evidence for believing the Scriptures to be the word of God. It would be easy to prove that this was the plain way in which the first Christians received this doctrine. They, with pious humility, received the simple testimony just as revelation gave it. It would have been well for their successors, had they strictly followed this example. But, alas! about two hundred years after Christ, men began the art of explaining what they did not understand, and thus produced strange, novel notions, and with them, vain disputes, absurd creeds, abominable proscriptions, cruel persecutions, bloody wars, and other calamitous circumstances, which have disgraced Christianity, and distressed Christians from that day to this. But we rejoice that our faith rests not on the wisdom of man. We have only to search and know the Scriptures, and without any human explications, simply believe, what that inspired book expressly tells us, that Jesus Christ is Divine.—Blessed being! his very enemies could never "convince him of sin," or discover in him any imper-

fection. All who truly saw him, could bear witness for him, that he was the image of God. They " beheld his glory," the glory "as of the only begotten of the Father, full "of grace and truth." Who of mortals can be likened unto him? All mortal excellence vanishes before him, as the vapour before the sun. He is even superior to the highest angel who stands before the throne. "The fulness of the godhead dwelleth in "him." O Lord, our God, how excellent is "thy name! Thou art, indeed, fairer than "the children of men*."

But the pre-eminence of Christ appears

* Many passages of Scripture, such as those now quoted, have either no meaning or a very absurd one, if Jesus Christ is not truly Divine. Hence, to explain them away, Socinians have recourse to all the arts of minute criticism. But is our faith here, to rest on minute criticism? Then the Gospel loses one of its chief characteristics—*universality*. It is fit only for the learned: it is designed only for a few, and not for the million: it is a riddle-book, and not a revelation.—“ Cannot one “know, (says an excellent writer,) that the Socinian interpreta-“tion of the texts relating to Christ’s Divinity, is not the mind “of Scripture? Yea, one may know it as certainly, as that a “counter is not the king’s coin, or that a monster is not a man.”

not only from the excellence of his person; but also from the works performed by him.—His works, like his person, are unspeakably glorious. He “is wonderful in coun-sel and excellent in working.”—He created the worlds, and while in this world of ours, he evinced himself Lord of its laws; he enlightened, and still enlightens its inhabitants; he blotted out their sins; he sanctified and still sanctifies their natures; and secures for them unutterable and eternal happiness.

HE CREATED THE WORLDS.—“ All things, “ (saith the voice of Inspiration,) were made “ by him, and without him, was not any “ thing made, that was made.—By him “ were all things created that are in hea-“ ven, and that are in earth, visible and in-“ visible, whether they be thrones, or domi-“ nions, or principalities or powers; all “ things were created by him, and for him. “ and he is before all things, and by him all “ things consist.” Whatever then, we dis-
cover, as great and wise and good in crea-tures, is but a faint image of the great-

ness and wisdom and goodness of Jesus Christ *.

And as He is thus the maker of the worlds, and the source of all their excellence, so while in this world of ours, He ~~EVINCED HIMSELF~~ ~~LORD OF ITS LAWS.~~ He but spake, and it was done. The filthy leper was cleansed in a moment, and the eye opened that was born blind. The waters heard his voice, and the raging tempest was still at his reproof. The very tomb confessed his power, and at his command inexorable death gave back his captive.

* Being once gravely asked by a zealous, conscientious Unitarian, "Whence the Nicene Fathers, and the Christians before them, derived their faith in the Divinity of Christ?"—I immediately answered, alluding to the passages just now quoted,—"From the writings of the beloved Disciple who lay on the Saviour's bosom, and of that great Apostle who had been caught up into the third Heaven." John i. 3. Coloss. i. 16.—This circumstance I would not have mentioned here, had it not been, that in my respectable friend's case, this simple answer proved satisfactory, and was followed by the most important consequences. Were such ready, fearless appeals to the plain language of Scripture more frequent, a stronger impression would probably be made, than by slow, tedious argumentation.

When he himself died, darkness covered the land ; the rocks rent, many of the dead awoke, and all nature was troubled, till, by his own power, he triumphantly rose again, ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and thus showed himself Lord both of the dead and of the living, and therefore high, indeed, above “the children of men.”

But even this influence over external nature, was surely not more glorious, than his influence over what is unspeakably superior, THE IMMORTAL MIND. While he controlled the world’s laws, he did infinitely more,—he enlightened its inhabitants. Before his coming, the nations were sunk in the grossest ignorance and superstition. They wandered unacquainted with God, and unblessed with the hope of eternal life. But when he appeared, moral darkness scattered before him. He poured full day upon the sightless mind : God and glory appeared, and “the Gentiles came to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising.” And still do his followers enjoy the blessings of his word, and can tell how

profitable they feel it for doctrine and consolation. “ Oh ! (they exclaim) how we ‘ love’ thy law ! Had it not been our delight, we should have perished in our affliction.—Lord ! teach us more of thy truth ; show us more of thy glory ; for as the heavens are high above the earth, so is thy truth above human wisdom, and thy glory above that of the children of men !”

And while Jesus, by his word and spirit, thus dissipates our darkness, he, at the same time, **BLOWS OUT, AS ONE VAST CLOUD, ALL OUR SINS.** The whole world lay guilty before God, and exposed to “ the wrath which is “ to come.” No man could redeem his brother, or even avert, for a moment, his awful doom, when, lo ! Jesus Christ offered to become our ransom. He was, literally, our Saviour ; he “ was made sin for us, though “ he himself knew no sin, that we might be “ made the righteousness of God in him.” His sufferings were efficacious, his sacrifice was accepted, and all who hear his voice and believe in his name, “ shall never pe-

"risk, neither shall any be able to pluck
"him out of his hand." What are we to
think, then of Christ? Thus mighty and
willing to save, is he not our beloved and
our friend, and from finishing such a stu-
pendous work, can he be less than Divine?
**Hath he not a name high above every
name? Is he not "fairer than the children
of men?"**

But to rise still higher in our conceptions
of his excellence, let us consider that he
not only enlightens our minds, and blots out
oursins, **HE ALSO SANCTIFIES OUR CORRUPTED
NATURES.** The mind that was earthly and
grovelling, delighted only with the objects
of sense and time, he purifies from the pol-
lutions of the world, elevates to things
above, and adorns with righteousness and
true holiness. Now this wonderful change,
the Scriptures represent as a *resurrection
from the dead*; as a *new birth*; as a *new cre-
ation*. And who, tell me, but he who cre-
ated man at first, can thus create him again?
Here then, behold and adore the glory of
our Saviour! He spake the widow's son

from the bier, and Lazarus from the tomb, and he also awakes millions of souls, dead in trespasses and sins, and makes them “ holy in all manner of conversation.” Truly, this is the Son of God with power! Let us give unto him, the glory due unto his name. Fall down and worship him, ye “ children of men*!”

* Here, I may be permitted to mention a thought which has often occurred to me.—Had Christ been a mere man, had he not been truly divine, it would be impossible to account for his present, sudden exaltation. After his resurrection, we are told, He became Lord both of the dead and the living. Angels and Archangels, principalities and powers, thrones and dominions, all things both in heaven and earth were made subject to him. He was even constituted Judge of the world; appointed to finish the Divine government, by rendering to every man according to his works. But had Christ been nothing more than a creature, had he been merely a man; his present, sudden and glorious exaltation, would be contrary to all that has ever been observed in the Divine procedure. Do not all beings seem to rise *gradually*, one acquisition laying the foundation for another, and preparing for higher acquisitions? Could we believe a person, who came and told us, that a certain child, instead of *gradually growing*, had *instantly* started into manhood, and was appointed to govern, and actually did govern, both wisely and well, a most extensive empire? It is impossible; and yet it would be infinitely easier to believe even this, than to believe, that a creature, a mere man, perhaps, should be raised, *at once*,

But the time would fail me, though I had adequate powers of expression, to give all the displays of the excellence of Christ. I shall now only state, in general, that while he enlightens the minds of his followers, while he blots out their sins, while he sanctifies their natures, HE SECURES FOR THEM UNUTTERABLE AND UNENDING HAPPINESS. The mind of man can be happy only in the infinite Being who made it. Nothing else is adequate to its celestial nature. And this happiness, our Lord Jesus Christ, does not reserve merely for a future world; even in the present world, he bequeaths to his disciples peace. "Peace, I leave unto you,

to be the Director and Judge of the universe.—Surely, those who have entertained such an extravagant notion, have not sufficiently attended to the analogy of nature. Many of them, (I do believe, without intention,) have done much, to render not only the Scripture unintelligible; but Christianity itself incredible.

How Christ could be both human and Divine, has often been made the subject of laborious inquiry; but ignorant as we, confessedly, are of the Divine Nature, knowing, as we do, that it is far beyond our comprehension, every such inquiry should be adjured, at once, as, to the last degree, both absurd and presumptuous.

“ my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you.—In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world. “ I have the keys of hell and of death.” His disciples rely upon his promise, and they have peace indeed. “ Great peace have they, and nothing shall offend them.” They “ depart in peace ; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” Every request is answered, every desire is gratified ; Jesus receives them to himself, and gives them this most delightful, most ennobling plaudit :—“ Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord.”—But I will not at tempt a description of this celestial joy. That which is imperfect must be done away, and that which is perfect must be come, before we can know the joy of heaven. “ Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God our Saviour, hath prepared for them that love him.” What a great, what a good, what a glorious Being ! The universe is

not so superior to “the small dust of the balance,” as He is to “the children of men.”

Accordingly, every possible praise, every possible honour is readily rendered to him. Even the eternal and omniscient Father proclaims him his beloved Son. “This is “my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And when he brought him into the world, he commanded the very hosts of heaven to worship him. “Let all the “angels worship him!” Angels hasted to obey, and this was their joyful ascription; “Glory to God in the highest, and on “earth, peace, good will towards men.”— And now that he has returned to dwell among them, angels love and adore him still. His glorious name sounds from all their harps, and his love is the subject of their everlasting song. Their number is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, and all these are heard, day and night; “saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to “receive power, and riches, and wisdom,

“ and strength, and honour, and glory, and
“ blessing.”—And shall not we, though but
the inhabitants of earth ; though but “ the
“ children of men,” rejoice to join them ?
Shall not we adore the excellence of Jesus,
and “ go on in his name, making mention
“ of his righteousness, even of his only.”—
Can we ever be so insensible as not to be
charmed with his grace ; not to love him
with all our hearts, and savinely feel what
he hath told us ;—“ If ye love me, keep my
“ commandments.”—The angels are the
ministers of his will ; and shall not we too
be angels, swift messengers to fulfil his
pleasure ? Shall not we, whatsoever others
do, gladly show forth his praise, and live and
die devoted to his service ?—Yes, will every
ardent Christian say ;—“ My soul doth glo-
“ ry in Christ, and will ever avouch him to
“ be my Lord. He is my only Saviour, and
“ all my dependence is upon him. I count
“ all things but loss, for the excellence of
“ the knowledge of him. I count not even
“ my life dear to me, that I may finish my
“ course with joy, and be welcomed into
“ paradise by him. Whom have I in hea-

“ ven but him, and there is none upon earth
 “ that I desire besides him. Salvation un-
 “ to the Lamb ! I would love him ; I would
 “ trust in him, and long to be with him,
 “ and to be like him.’ He is all, and in all,
 “ purer than the angels of God, and “ fairer
 “ than the children of men *.”

But if Christ possesses such unrivalled excellence, if he possesses every thing that can kindle our love, or excite our veneration, what shall we say, what shall we think of those who, though invited and pressed to contemplate his character, and to love and venerate him, yet continue unmoved

* So strongly does the language of Scripture express the Divine excellence of Christ, and the propriety of worshipping him, that even the ancient Socinians acknowledged its force, and admitted that Christ was an object of religious worship. To admit this was, doubtless, very inconsistent in them; it was a concession directly hostile to their system; but most friendly to ours, who believe in the Divinity of Jesus.—The following are their words :

Christus ad dextram Dei in cœlis colloquatus etiam ab angelis
 adorandus est.—*Catachesis Ecclesiarum Polonicarum.* Sect. 4.
 —Oppens in cœlo et in terra potestatem accepit; et omnia
 Deo solo excepto, ejus pedibus sunt subjecta. *Hist.*

by all that we can say of him ? They “ dis-
“ cern no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty,
“ that they should desire him.” They are
“ enemies to him by wicked works.” They
do not glory in his cross, nor prize his sal-
vation. They turn a deaf ear to his words,
violate his holy laws, and blasphemously
say, by their conduct, at least, *that they will
not have him to rule over them.* Most infar-
tuated men ! They have “ sent them strong
“ delusion to believe a lie :” they are blind-
ed and “ led captive by the devil, at his
“ will.” Strange ! they are in love with
sin ; they are greedy of death, and rapa-
cious of ruin. May the Lord have mercy
upon them ! May he rectify their disorder-
ed minds, and “ give them repentance to
“ the acknowledging of the truth.” O
Thou “ who commandedst the light to
“ shine out of darkness, shine in their
“ hearts, to give them the light of the
“ knowledge of the Divine glory in the
“ face of Jesus Christ ! ” Turn away their
eyes from beholding vanity ; induce them
to behold the glory of Him, who is so
glorious above “ the children of men.”

Happy, most happy they ! who, by the eye of faith, already behold him ! The transforming sight, even now, purifies and elevates, and delights their minds ; and what effects it shall produce, at last, transcends conception. “ It doth not yet appear what they shall be ;” but this we know,—they shall bid farewell to sin, join the first-born sons of light, reflect the lustre of heaven, and be, themselves, “ fairer than the children of men.”

hold him in the garden, and on the cross; behold him pouring out his precious blood, and drinking the cup of unutterable woe.—Ah! how destructive that, from which no created arm could save ; which nothing but the blood of the Son of God could expiate ! —From this tremendous effect of sin, we may judge of the nature of sin itself. . .

But to be duly impressed with the demerit of sin, consider not only Him against whom it is committed ; and the humiliation and sufferings appointed, and, submitted to, in order to atone for it ; consider also, the dreadful consequences which still result from it.—Sin is the frightful source of every evil which embitters our lot. It, at first, expelled man from paradise, and made him subject to all those unnumbered troubles, to which he is now, as naturally born, “ as the sparks fly upward.” It is this which mingles with our sweetest comforts, fear, and disappointment, and vexation of spirit. It is this which racks the body with pain, and the soul with remorse ; which produces all the evils of envy, and hatred, and strife, and violence ; which embroils society, kindles the flames of war, and unsheathes the sword of persecution,

which takes away peace from life, and hope from death, which brought forth death, at first, and which has, ever since, cloathed it with all its terrors ; which arms nature, and the God of nature against us.—It is on account of this cruel enemy, that “ the “ whole creation groaneth and travaileth in “ pain together until now ;” and that even Christians, “ groan within themselves, wait-“ ing for the adoption, that is, the redemp-“ tion of their body.”

To have a still deeper sense of the malignity of sin, let us consider, what would be its consequences, did it universally prevail. Into what a dreadful state of anarchy, would it convert the world ! How soon would it blast the beauty of God’s works, and involve all nature in desolation and ruin ! Now, every instance of sin, is a *tendency* to this. It is that *began*, which, if carried much *farther*, would issue in this fatal consequence.—We cannot, then, indulge an irregular desire, or a wrong thought, without taking a step to all that is terrible ; without contributing to deface the beauty of the creation, and overturn all law, and order, and happiness.

Yet the effects of sin, in the present world, however awful, are nothing, when compared to those, which shall take place *hereafter*; when the righteous and the wicked shall be completely separated, and every one receive according to his deeds. What shall be the punishment of sin, *then*, we cannot, *now*, possibly imagine. But when we seriously consider its horrid nature and tendency, we can hardly entertain too dreadful apprehensions of the loss which it may entail, or be too anxious to remove all the remains of it from our tempers, and to escape to as great a distance, as possible, from the danger with which it threatens us. For what danger can be so hugely great, or so truly terrifying? The corruption of the soul, the thorough depravation of the moral principle exposes man to misery, the greatest in degree, and the longest in duration. Here, indeed, there is cause for wailing the most bitter, and affliction the most unrestrained.—The impenitent sinner shall be excluded from the favour of God, and thrust into the “outer darkness,” to have his dwelling with infernals.—“It is a fearful “thing to fall into the hands of the living “God.—Who can dwell with devouring

“ flames ; who can lie down in everlasting
“ burnings ?”

Is sin so hateful to God, and is it followed with such awful punishment ? and shall we be still at ease, and go on in the commission of it ? Shall we be guilty of such monstrous folly ? Shall we be so ungrateful to God, and cruel to our own souls ? Shall we thus receive the offers of tender mercy ? Are we expectants of a future life, and are we content to live in future misery ? Future, incalculable misery, must be our fate, if we continue in sin. And we are all sinners ; “ if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Our sins are more than we can number, and every sin, without being forgiven, “ bringeth forth death.”—How then, shall we be forgiven ? How shall we be saved ? We cannot save ourselves ; the highest angel in heaven cannot save us. To Jesus Christ only, can we look for help in this time of need.—And surely, no person, who duly reflects, can object, to this part of the Christian economy. What are we here taught, but to expect blessings, spiritual and eternal, through the instrumentality of Christ ? And, certainly,

there is no difficulty in understanding this, for here the economy of grace seems to be perfectly analogous to the economy of nature; to what we, continually, witness and experience. We daily see and feel, that one man is made *instrumental* in conferring, the blessings of providence, upon another; and we are even told, that the angels themselves, are appointed "ministering spirits, " to minister for them who shall be heirs of "salvation." May we not easily believe, then, that the Son of God was appointed to be the agent of his Father's love; that through his obedience, and sufferings, and death, "sin—the transgression of the law," —was to be abolished, death to be overcome, and all the blessings of redemption fully obtained?—The Gospel graciously reveals him as "the end of the law for "righteousness," to every one that believeth." He has satisfied its demands, and, if we believe, redeemed us from its "curse,—being made a curse for us."— Let us all then draw nigh to him, by faith, plead his sufferings and death, and resign ourselves to his government. If by faith, we do draw nigh to him, and "confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all

“unrighteousness.” Thus, though transgressors of the law, we may be “justified by faith—have peace with God, and joy unspeakable, and full of glory—receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.”

Sinners, turn ye, turn ye. for why will you die? Haste, haste, from the tents of sin; break the chains by which you are held, and be not covetous of thraldom and of misery.

Christians, “be of good cheer, for your sins are forgiven you.” Only watch and pray, and go on, with determined mind, in the path of duty. Continue followers of that which is good, and nothing shall, eventually, harm you. God is for you, and who, or what can ultimately prevail against you?—The power of sin shall be destroyed; your hearts shall be perfectly hallowed; every angel shall be your friend; God shall be your portion, and Heaven shall be your home.—O Heaven! thou habitation of the just; thou city of the living God! Into thee, “nothing that defileth can enter.” Thy pleasures are pure and unalloyed; perfect, and eternal!

DEATH, THE WAGES OF SIN.

ROM. VI. 23.

The wages of sin is death.

The Apostle Paul, while addressing the Christians at Rome, endeavoured to impress upon them, a just sense of the obligations which they were under, and of the precious privileges to the enjoyment of which they were graciously invited. They professed to be the disciples of a crucified master, and they were, therefore, bound to die to the love and practice of sin, as He died to deliver them from its punishment : and as he not only died ; but “ rose again “ for their justification,” so they were also bound to rise from the grave of corruption, and walk with him “ in newness of life.—

"Reckon ye yourselves," says he, "to be dead, indeed, unto sin; but alive, unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."— "What! shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?—God forbid!" Conduct like this, would not be more inconsistent with our Christian profession, than destructive of our "blessed hope;" for let us attend to this solemn declaration of the Holy Spirit—"The wages of sin is death."

Were any one, to ask me, what is the worthiest object of our most ardent pursuit, and what we should give the greatest possible diligence to obtain; I should answer—*holiness*; because it comprehends all that is great and good—*its end is everlasting life*.— Were any one, again, to ask me, what should be our utmost dread, and what we should give the utmost diligence to avoid; I should answer—*sin*; because it comprehends all that is base and wretched, and necessarily excludes us from *everlasting life*. To the same degree that holiness is beneficial and lovely, sin is pernicious and de-

testable. It is of essential malignity and ill desert, and will, sooner or later, be seen by all, to be the greatest evil, with which our nature can be afflicted.' Other evils, such as disease and poverty ; losses and calumny, affect only what is *external and foreign* to us ; but they need not disturb our minds, nor can they do the least injury to what is truly *ourselves* ; but sin pierces and wounds, and ravages *ourselves*. It hurts, not so much, the body, the reputation or fortune, as the *man* : it plants anguish, desolation, and ruin, in the *soul* itself. Other evils may, in the end, prove useful to us, but this is eternally and unchangeably evil; the bane of every heart into which it enters, and the destruction of all those who are not rescued from its power, and delivered from its punishment.—“ The wages of sin is “ death.”

All that I, at present, propose, is merely to consider the nature and extent of the punishment, which, under the government of God, sin is appointed to entail, and which is denominated *death*.—“ The wages of sin “ is death.”

Now, in the ~~first~~ PLACE, this punishment evidently implies *corporeal* death.—This death, which consists in the separation of the soul from the body, the heathens considered as the necessary result of the constitution of our frame. The Scriptures, however, teach us a very different doctrine. They inform us that man, though partly composed, indeed, of corruptible materials, and therefore capable of dissolution, was originally designed to be incorruptible; to be a stranger to disease, and weakness, and decay, and to flourish in immortal youth and vigour. But this felicity he was to enjoy, only upon condition of this continuing perfectly innocent, and yielding unreserved submission, and spotless obedience to the will of God. If the condition should, in the least, be broken, then, instantly, this happy constitution of things was to be changed, and immortal man appointed to die. Alas! the condition was broken, and we all see, and feel, and deplore, the calamity which has followed. The awful penalty has, ever since, been inflicted.—“ By “ one man, sin entered into the world, and “ death by sin; so death passed upon all “ men, for that all have sinned.”—The fa-

tal sentence has gone forth, and none can elude its execution. "The living know "that they shall die."—Go to the house of mourning; there behold your fellow-creature extended in mortal agony; pale and ghastly, bidding the world adieu! That same change, remember, must take place in you also.—Descend next into the chambers of the tomb,—there behold the putrefying flesh, and the mouldering bones, and there, remember, shall, one day, be your dreary dwelling.—"I know that thou wilt "bring me to death, and to the house ap-
"pointed for all living."—And why is this rueful change decreed? Why is this terrifying punishment inflicted?—We have all sinned, and "the wages of sin is death." May we all be sensible of this before it be too late! Whenever we witness death, may we think of sin! There was no such thing as death in the world till sin made its entrance. Before this, there was no existing cause to produce death; nothing by which the human frame could be disordered or impaired. Minute philosophers!—mean half-thinkers! Ye may repudiate and smile at this; but still our faith shall stand; for it rests on the sure basis of Scripture; on the

unerring word of God. And “ let God be true, and every man a liar.”

But the punishment here denounced, includes not only *corporeal*; but *spiritual* death.—As the body has no life, but when united to the soul, so neither can the soul enjoy any thing that deserves the name of life, but when it is united to God; that is, when its will accords with His; when it feels the animating and comforting influence of his grace, and has all its faculties consecrated to his service. Then the soul enjoys a divine life; it inhabits an upper region; it dwells with God; receives His light; bears his image, and is “ satisfied with his likeness.”—But when the soul forsakes God, it forsakes its only true happiness, sinks into baseness and impurity, and feels influenced by nothing, but by the most sordid, narrow, and contemptible considerations. It becomes the aversion of all wise and good beings; the mere creature of this perishing world; content to bury, here, all its high celestial hopes, and be, as the Scriptures awfully express it, “ dead in trespasses and sins.”—Most deplorable case!—When I commit my beloved friend

to the dust, I can, scarce, bear up, under the afflictive stroke ; and hasten, in silence and in solitude, to give vent to the fulness of my sorrow. But had he lived, and yet been dead to the fear and love of God ; dead to all concern about his soul, and its eternal salvation, my heart should, then, have been pierced with far keener anguish.—How did such a case, affect and melt the heart of the holy and compassionate Jesus ! He cried, and wept while he cried ;—“ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace !—but now, they are hid from thine eyes *.”

Yet, how many such pitiable characters, do we daily meet with on every side !—Behold that slave of wealth ! His whole time and attention are engaged in seeking what he may never obtain ; and which though obtained, can neither abide with him long, nor yield him real satisfaction during its abode. Suppose him to have, even, all the success which, in this vain world, can be enjoyed ;—suppose him continually adding

"house to house 'and field to field ;" yet will all this make him truly happy ?—No, —there is still an aching void, which the whole world can never fill. His heart is severed from its proper object. Disappointment, and anxiety, and fear, prey upon his spirit. He is "without hope, and without "God in the world." He *liveth* in sin, and is *dead* while he *liveth*.

Behold, again, the man of pleasure ! He covets only the coarse gratification of his senses. Terrene passion is indulged without controul, while heaven-descended reason seems neglected and forgotten. Where is the boasted dignity of his nature ; what worth does he display, and what true pleasure, does he enjoy ?—Loathsome wretch ! I see only a walking monument of folly and shame ; of pollution and guilt.—He too, is "without hope, and without God in the "world." He too, *liveth* in sin, and is *dead* while he *liveth*.

Behold, also, the slave of ambition ! His sole object is earthly honour. To be talked of, to be applauded, to acquire, what is called, *a name*, he will plan, and labour, and

sacrifice every thing... Egregious folly!—But thus he lives, and thus he dies, and with a few vain words inscribed upon his grave-stone, he sinks into the dust and is no more seen. But, is this acting the part of a rational being? Is this living the life of an immortal?—It is grasping the shadow, and neglecting the substance. It is forfeiting true glory and honour, and courting disgrace, and degradation, and ruin.—Ah! infatuated man! thou too, art “without ‘hope, and without God in the world.’” Thou too, *livest* in sin, and art *dead* whilst thou *livest*.

In the same melancholy, dreadful state, are all those, of every description, who “mind earthly things,” and neglect the improvement and salvation of the soul,—who neglect the “one thing needful.” They are far from God, the source of good, the Fountain of life; and while far from Him, they must perish. Distance from God implies sin; and “the wages of sin is death.”

. But this death becomes far more awful, when extended to a future world. It is, then, called “the second death.” Then,

there is not only deprivation of happiness; but positive infliction of incalculable misery. In every attentive and feeling mind, this must give rise to the most painful and melancholy reflections.—Millions of reasonable beings, naturally immortal, and capable of infinite improvement, bereaved of all their hopes; cast away from God and bliss, and sunk in destruction!—What can be imagined more shocking? But here, even imagination fails. Presumption itself, dares not attempt description. It is as impossible to paint the horrors of hell, as the joys of heaven. When an object is infinite, the mind sinks under it, absorbed and confounded.

This is an awful subject, and it demands deep and serious reflection.—How should it rouse the careless; alarm the hypocrites, and stimulate even Christians!

HOW SHOULD IT ROUSE THE CARELESS!—Strange! that any should be careless of their souls! of their immortal happiness! Were we not all daily witnesses of the fact, we could not believe that a rational being could be careless, when life and death depended.

THE
SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

HEB. II. 10.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings,

IN the preceding chapter, the inspired Apostle informs the Hebrews of the dignified person and character of the blessed Jesus. He is represented as the Son of God—as the Maker of the worlds—as the Almighty supporter of every thing that exists. All things both in heaven and earth are subject to his dominion. Even angels and archangels, those exalted and

happy spirits, bow down and worship him. And worthy is He to receive the honours which are paid him—for he is “the first ‘born of every creature.’”—“The brightness,” saith the Apostle, “of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” Wonder then, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth! when it is told, that this divine, this exalted being condescended to assume our nature, and to lead a life of pain, of poverty, and affliction for our sakes. When degraded man fell from the dignity of innocent nature, and became obnoxious to death and destruction, and when on his behalf, as patron or intercessor, there was none to appear, mercy and love beamed on the countenance of the Son of Man. Unsought, unimplored, he compassionated the misery of our fallen state, and in the assembly of heaven declared his willingness to “carry our sorrows,” and suffer for our sins. — The Almighty Father accepts his gracious proffers, and makes the counsels of men and the ministry of angels subservient in preparing the way for the appearance of this Captain of our salvation. At length the long wished for period ar-

rieves.—The Son of God—the Saviour of the world descends, not surrounded with pomp and influence, as a misjudging world might expect; but humble and lowly, “in the form of a servant.” He who was the Lord of Angels, becomes “despised and rejected of men.” He who from eternity inhabited the dwellings of glory, submits to be “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Instead of being bred up amidst the grandeurs of a court and the splendours of a palace, he is “born in a stable and laid in a manger.” Instead of being followed and honoured by the great ones of the earth, he is, even in his infant years, persecuted and cruelly sought after to be slain. And the farther he advances in life, the more grievous and the more multiplied do his afflictions become. Descended from the meanest origin, and placed in the humblest station, he learns the occupation of his supposed father, and is obliged to earn his bread with “the sweat of his brow.” Though *heir of all things*, he is exposed to every species of want and distress—afflicted without a comforter—persecuted without a protector, and wandering about, according to his own pathetic complaint, because he “had not where to lay his head.” And

after thus passing through scenes of the deepest sorrow, he is at last put to a cruel and an ignominious death. Betrayed by one of his own disciples, and in the hour of extremity deserted by all, the blessed Saviour of the world is dragged away by a lawless multitude, insulted by a ruffian soldiery, and like a common malefactor nailed to the accursed tree.—This poor persecuted life and ignominious death of our Saviour, while it affected his friends with the most pungent grief, confirmed his enemies in their hatred and their prejudices. The Jews, that infatuated race, seduced by carnal views, and impelled by ambitious hopes, had always indulged the vain expectation of a temporal Messiah—who was to assume the character of a mighty prince—was to free them from the Roman yoke, and lead them forth amidst the triumphs of conquest and the splendours of dominion. To them, therefore, the humble afflicted state of Jesus was a stumbling block, which their misguided minds could not get over. Though he “spake as never man spake,” and did works of wonder which never man did, yet because he lived amidst poverty, and reproach, and in the end died upon a cross, they rejected him with disdain and

abhorrence. The heathen philosophers, also, concurred with the Jews in viewing the meanness and sufferings of Jesus, as an objection against his divine authority too powerful for any argument to outweigh. In their eyes nothing appeared more unreasonable than to suppose, that the spotless, innocent Son of God, should suffer and die, and that by his death and crucifixion, life and immortality should be purchased for men. This story seemed to them, as it does to some of their neighbour-infidels of the present day, so ridiculously framed as to carry its own refutation along with it. But blind and miserably deluded mortals, what they accounted an insurmountable objection to Christianity, was really an argument in its favour. What to the Jews was a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, was really the “power of God, “and the wisdom of God.” This the Apostle expressly declares to the Hebrews. Instead of being offended at the humiliation and sufferings of our Lord, or viewing them as inconsistent with our conceptions of Deity, he represents them as the appointment of heaven—as a most wise and effectual method devised by the Almighty for

the salvation of men.—“ We see Jesus, “ says he, who was made a little lower than “ the angels, that he by the grace of God “ should taste death for every man, for the “ suffering of death crowned with glory and “ honour.” “ For it became Him for whom “ are all things, and by whom are all “ things, in bringing many sons into glory, “ to make the Captain of their salvation “ perfect through sufferings.” To make good this position of the Apostle in opposition to the rude clamours of the infidel, will be the object of this discourse. Far from considering the afflicted life and reproachful death of our divine master, as derogating from the justness of his claims, I shall endeavour to shew, that they were highly proper and expedient, nay, that, according to our views, they were necessary.

FIRST, To put beyond suspicion the truth of his mission.

SECONDLY, To exhibit him as a perfect pattern of virtue to his followers.

THIRDLY, To make him a proper propitiation for our sins.

FOURTHLY, To make room for his bringing more fully to light, a future state of immortality and glory.

And, LASTLY, To give us full assurance, that he knows and sympathizes with our frailties, and our sorrows, and will therefore mercifully intercede with the Father in our behalf.

For all these different reasons, it will appear, that it behoved the Captain of our salvation to be “ made perfect through “ sufferings.”

And, first, it was expedient, in order to leave no room for suspecting the truth of his mission.

Had the Messiah appeared as a powerful and illustrious prince, the bulk of mankind could not have had an opportunity of freely examining his credentials. Almost none, but the great and the mighty, would have dared to come into his presence: or if they did venture to approach him, they would undoubtedly have been filled with dread and perturbation. Dazzled with his splendor

and his glory, they could not have maintained that calm dispassionate state of mind, which is necessary for judging of the pretensions of a messenger from heaven.

And had the Gospel been ushered into the world in this splendid manner, what a ground of exultation would it have afforded to the infidel and profane! Would they not have long since triumphantly said, that the Christian faith was not a rational homage to the truth, but a blind submission to earthly influence and authority. But by appearing in the lowliest scene of poverty, Jesus shewed, that he desired to take no unfair advantage of the weakness of the human mind. Unawed by external pomp and splendour, the meanest as well as the highest had access to his person, could with freedom examine the right which he had to the authority which he claimed—judge of the doctrines which he taught, and the miracles which he performed. And as the humble, suffering state of Jesus, encouraged the free examination of his credentials, it also shewed to those who examined them—that he was, not as a deceiver would have been, directed by any carnal, ambitious views, but was, in every thing which he said

and did, upright and sincere. If he was a deceiver, truly, he was the most extraordinary one the world ever saw. For as his doctrine every where required an inviolable regard to truth, and a contempt of all temporal interests, when brought into competition with our duty, so the poor, painful life which he lived, and the cruel excruciating death which he died, demonstrated that he sacredly observed himself, what he so pointedly required of others. They shew, that he breathed nothing of the spirit of this world, or of those impostors who have an interest in deluding mankind. Intent only on promoting the spiritual and eternal happiness of human nature, he spent his days in the deepest affliction, and ignominiously ended them on a cross. This is what we are certain no deceiver ever willingly did. Men may have sometimes, indeed, suffered and died for what was false, but never if they themselves were conscious of the falsehood. Now, if the claims of Jesus to the character of the Son of God, and the Messiah of the Jews, were not founded in truth, he himself must have known them to be so. But when the most bitter agonies, nay, even death itself, and that, too, of the most

frightful kind, were full in his view, he never, in the least, retracted what he had said, but firmly supported to the last his doctrine and his innocence. But had he not submitted to that humiliation and those sufferings which he actually did, our most holy faith would have wanted one of the strongest pillars which support it. But its Author not being placed above suspicion, the best believers would have had often reason to tremble for their hope.

But besides, while the mean, afflicted condition of our Lord, thus strongly evidences the truth of his religion, it also renders that evidence more palpable and striking by the glory and success with which the religion was afterwards attended. The weaker and more contemptible our Saviour appeared in the eyes of men, the more visibly did the outstretched arm of Omnipotence appear in his behalf.—That those who are invested with great power and authority, may perform many illustrious deeds, and fill the world with the noise of their names, is a circumstance which we can easily suppose. When, for instance, we read that the Conqueror of the East, at the head

of a veteran and victorious army of Macedonians, extended his empire, and made surrounding nations bow down before him, we receive the story without ever deeming it in the least improbable. And equally easy do we find it, to account from natural causes for the ferocious prophet of Arabia being able, with wealth and power upon his side, to propagate his imposition in a weak and an ignorant age.—But that one of an ignoble rank—an obscure Galilean—a poor carpenter's son should publish his doctrine in the face of the most violent opposition—that, in a short time, he should overturn the most firmly established institutions among the nations—that “the foolishness of his preaching” should triumph over the prejudices of the Jews—the superstition of the Gentiles—and all the learning of the heathen philosophers—in a word, that he, who like a slave and a traitor was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem, should soon come to be revered all over the enlightened earth, as the Prince of life, “and the Lord of Glory, this is an unparalleled event, which we must acknowledge surpasses all the power and ingenuity of man: This is after a peculiar manner “the Lord's doing,” and it

appears "marvellous in our eyes." But had not Jesus dwelt among men in an humble and an afflicted state, it must be allowed, that the universal spread of our religion would not have been conspicuous, nor its evidence appeared so striking. We should have been deprived of an argument the most powerful for silencing the objections of his enemies, and confirming the faith of his friends: And this we may venture to assign, as one reason, why his sufferings are represented as so indispensable in the divine scheme of the Gospel.

But, **SECONDLY**, The sufferings of Jesus were not only indispensable, or expedient for producing in our minds an unsuspecting confidence of the truth of his mission: they were also proper for exhibiting him as a perfect pattern of virtue to his followers.

That example is preferable to precept, is a maxim the truth of which has been felt and acknowledged by every one. It is of all others by far the most pleasing and most powerful method of instruction. While the soundest abstract reasoning, and the most salutary counsels are often

productive of no effect, a virtuous and a good example scarce ever fails to draw our attention, and make a vivid and a lasting impression upon our minds. It speaks to our hearts, and operates on our sympathy. It shews, that what was practised by others, is likewise practicable by us, and thus while it charms, it, at the same time, transforms the soul. Well acquainted with the truth of this, our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, always exhibited, in his own character, a most perfect pattern of that obedience which he required of his disciples. His precepts were recommended by his practice —his doctrines were illustrated and enforced by the purity and perfection of his own life and manners. But had not Jesus submitted to the common sufferings of humanity, his example would not have been so instructive and interesting. Not placed in the same situation with ourselves, we could not have had so great an inducement to copy the perfections which adorned his character. The idea would have soon entered into our minds, that the example of one whose nature was so distant from our own, it could neither be necessary, nor yet profitable for us to imitate. But when we

behold the Saviour of men placed in like circumstances with ourselves, subject to all our sinless infirmities—submitting to the most unmerited indignities—exposed to the most bitter and unrelenting persecution, and even patiently enduring the cross, despising the shame—when in the midst of these distresses and difficulties, we behold him acquitting himself so gloriously, we dwell, with delight, upon the, at once lovely and admirable character, and feel ourselves naturally prompted to give all diligence to make it the pattern of our conduct.

And as the sufferings of Christ were thus necessary to make the virtues of his life appear fitted for our imitation, so without these sufferings there would have been many divine and heavenly graces, which his life could not have exhibited. Those which are commonly denominated the passive virtues, and which we account the most hard to practise, could then have had no place in his character. For where there are no difficulties and no dangers, there can be no display of fortitude and perseverance. Where there is no unmerited reproach—where there are no wrongs—no

injuries sustained, there can be no proof of a meek, a merciful, and a forgiving mind. And where there are no calamities and afflictions to be borne, there never can be any scope for the exertion of patience and resignation, those striking features in the Christian character.—It is true, indeed, that Jesus, though he had not submitted to sufferings himself, might have delivered the most perfect instructions for bearing them to his followers; but then these instructions, by not being exemplified by their Author, would soon, it is to be feared, have been regarded but as the plausible speculations of a moralist, which might indeed amuse him and his disciples in theory, but which it was impossible to reduce to practice. Thus, his purest precepts, being viewed only as so many fine sayings, but useless rules, could have had little or no influence upon human conduct. But when delivered, as they were, by one who himself, in the most perfect manner possible, exercised them—by one who himself peacefully groaned under all the sinless miseries of life, and even, for those who were his enemies, poured out his innocent soul unto death, when delivered by such a one, they have their proper

weight and authority, and ~~were~~ home to our souls "in the demonstration of the "spirit and of power."

But not only were the sufferings of the Messiah requisite to make his example both of sufficient influence and extent; they were requisite also to render that example more exalted and illustrious than it could otherwise have been. They ennobled and perfected the graces of his character: They called forth to public view, in a substantial and living form, that consummate and unshaken integrity, which never, before nor since, appeared among men. A considerable degree of moral excellence may indeed be shewn in the midst of affluence and prosperity, but surely it cannot be then so confirmed, and so conspicuous as it might be rendered, were it brought to the test by sufferings. Virtue, like gold, never appears so pure and so brilliant, as when it is severely tried in the furnace. Though man led the most blameless life—though he were even adorned with all the perfections of which humanity is capable, yet if he never met with misfortunes—if he was never stretched upon the bed of sorrow, or doomed to drink

the bitter draught of affliction, there would still be room for the tongue of calumny to allege, that though his life was fair, yet his principles were neither stable nor sincere, and that he now adhered to his duty, only because he found it friendly to his happiness.—“Doth Job serve God for nought?” was the soul surmise thrown out by the first TRADUCER of virtue against the servant of the Lord, when visited only with the smiles of prosperity. And indeed in such a situation we can never certainly know, what share the motives of the world may have in directing his conduct. But let this favourite of fortune be cast down from the height of his happiness—bereave him of all his earthly comforts, and make his head bare to every blast of adversity, and still let him maintain his integrity and hold fast the profession of his faith without wavering, and for suspicion or detraction, no room will be left. So glorious will the character appear, that even from the reluctant lips of malice herself, it will extort the well-merited tribute of admiration and praise. Had not Jesus then been afflicted and persecuted even unto death, the efficacy of his life would have been lessened—his spheres of

activity would have been narrowed; and the excellence of his nature less visibly displayed. Accordingly, his example would have wanted much of that transcendent, triumphant, illustrious beauty which now adorns it. The garden of Gethsemane, the judgment-hall of Pilate, and the hill of Calvary were necessary to give the finishings to his character, and render him that spectacle of greatness and of glory, which the armies of heaven, as well as the inhabitants of earth, will for ever contemplate with the blended emotions of delight and wonder.

But, besides, considering our Lord as the Author of a new religion, and as the pattern of all perfection and excellence, let us in the THIRD place consider him as a Priest who was to make an atonement for our sins, and in this view also, the propriety of his sufferings will evidently appear.

That Jesus suffered and died that he might be a proper propitiation for the offences of mankind, is the plain and uniform language of Scripture. He himself de-

claims, that his blood was shed for the remission of sins,* "He suffered," says the Apostle, † the ‡ just for the unjust, that by "expiating our guilt he might bring us to God." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace, or the punishment necessary to obtain our peace, was inflicted upon him, and with his stripes we are healed ‡."

This doctrine has given much offence to some superficial or rather presumptuous minds. Considering the divine perfections only in a particular view, they have boldly pronounced as absurd and incredible, that it should ever be requisite for the Son of God to suffer and expire for the iniquities of men. But let such remember, that upon subjects on which we can never think with too much reverence, nor judge with too much caution, nothing can be more foolish, than for a short-sighted creature like man, to rely upon the combinations of his own imagination, and adopt these as the dictates of reason and of truth. Revelation

* Mat. xxvi. 28. † Pet. iii. 18. ‡ Isaiah liii. 3

ought certainly here to be our guide, and when taken as such, the submission of Christ to sorrow and death as an atonement for sin, will appear to those, at least, of humble and attentive minds, neither inconsistent nor irrational. For to which of our ideas of the Divinity does it seem contradictory to say,—that in the great extensive scheme of Providence, of which the wisest see but a small part, it became fit, perhaps unavoidable, that an extraordinary degree of sufferings should befall a holy innocent person, that he by his patient enduring of them, might be the appointed means of averting those dreadful evils, which an apostate race had deserved, and of procuring those divine blessings, to which, of themselves, they were not entitled. Far from being incompatible with our conceptions of the most High, this appears in the highest degree consistent, and reasonable. For, recollect, when God created man, and gave him a law, by which to regulate his conduct, did he not, at the same time, as an all-wise legislator, threaten him and his posterity with death, in case of disobedience? How then could any saviour or surety deliver them, but by taking the

punishment, or the sufferings which they had incurred, upon himself, and paying "the rigid satisfaction, death for death." Therefore it was, that the divine Jesus, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and knew the counsels of heaven, says,—"the Son of man must be lifted up." There was a necessity for his poverty, his pain, but especially his crucifixion; because these were stipulated in the covenant of peace, between him and the Father, when in glory together, before the world was. Some, indeed, there may be, absurd enough to imagine, that the Supreme Being, without the infliction of sufferings, might have easily passed an act of indemnity, and not permitted what they call the severity of law and justice to obstruct the current of his grace. But how can we think, that God would ever dispense with the exercise of that which was holy, and just, and good? How can we suppose, that He who is of purer eyes than to behold mighty, would ever suffer, under his government, sin to pass unpunished? The Apostle Paul is most explicit upon this important point: He informs us,—not that God set aside the rights of his law and justice,—but that he

"set forth Jesus to be a propitiation, "through faith in his blood," with this express design, adds the Apostle, "that he might declare his righteousness," or, which is the same, that he might demonstrate not only his clemency, but his justice—that Sovereign justice whose essential character it is, not only to reward obedience, but to punish transgression.

Had not Christ then suffered and died, we could never have reasonably hoped for the remission of sins. For had pardon been dispensed by the Almighty to his offending creatures, without exacting the penalty due to their crimes,—how would the glory of the divine perfections have been displayed, and the majesty of the divine government maintained? Who would have regarded its authority, or feared to violate its commands? Sinners would have been emboldened to multiply their transgressions, and tempted to suppose, that the God of unspotted purity—the God of unchangeable veracity, was altogether such a one as themselves. Nay, the evil might not have

been confined to earth alone; but might even have spread its baneful influence among the principalities of heaven. Beholding sinners violating the rules of righteousness with impunity, Intellectual Beings of a higher order might have been led to entertain disadvantageous notions of their Sovereign Legislator, and at length been induced, like men, to rebel against his rightful supremacy. But when in the councils on high, it was solemnly declared by the Father, that nothing less than the sufferings and sacrifice of the "brightness of his glory," and the "Beloved of his soul," could remove the dreadful forfeiture, and expiate the deadly guilt which fallen man had incurred, the majesty of heaven was awfully proclaimed, and while grace was freely shewn—the order and ends of the divine government were fully secured. The honour of the law was vindicated, and the immaculate purity of the Lawgiver declared; the demands of justice were amply satisfied; and the extent of mercy copiously displayed. And while the highest degree of glory thus redounded to all the perfections of God, everlasting light, and life, and joy were conferred upon the

returning children of men." The gates of the heavenly paradise were again set open; the guardian cherubim who stood by the "Tree of life," were removed; the flaming sword which turned every way to defend it, was sheathed; to his erring creatures, a voice from the Eternal said, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Here take, and eat. and live for ever."

Thus have I endeavoured to demonstrate, that the sufferings of the blessed Jesus, instead of lessening the lustre of his character and the justness of his claims, must seem rather, to every impartial and reflecting mind, to perfect and confirm them.

First, By their putting beyond suspicion the truth of his mission; *Secondly*, By their exhibiting him as a pattern of virtue and all perfection to his followers; *And Thirdly*, By their making him a proper propitiation for our sins.

There are still other views in which we proposed to make the expediency of these sufferings appear. But the illustration of these, and the inferences to be deduced, from the whole, shall be reserved

for the subject of another discourse. Allow me now only to observe, that since the sufferings of our Lord, appear to form so essential a part of the wondrous scheme of our redemption, "God forbid that we should ever be ashamed of them." Rather, like Paul of Tarsus, let us learn to glory in them. Nay, impressed with so deep a sense of their value and importance, let us also, like this wise and pious Apostle, learn to glory in nothing else.

SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

HEB. 2. 10.

Second Sermon on this text.

THE low and suffering state of the Messiah was, doubtless, the earliest objection which was brought against his religion. He laid claim to the character of the Son of God and the King of the Jews, but he lived in the form of a servant, and was crucified like a slave. To those, therefore, who were incapable of reconciling a humble appearance with a great design, this was a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. "Why did not Christ, (say they,) appear in the power and the majesty of the Father?

"Would not this have comported better with
"our conceptions of the dignity, both of
"God and of him? Would not a Saviour of
"a noble descent, and with a suitable re-
"tinue, have commanded more confidence
"and respect, and been of greater advan-
"tage to the world: than one who was
"cloathed with poverty, oppressed with
"sorrow, borne down with affliction, and
"seemingly every way more miserable him-
"self, than the unhappy creatures whom he
"came to redeem." Such were the imagi-
nations of an evil, and an adulterous gene-
ration. But their foolish hearts were dar-
kened. They erred, not discerning the wis-
dom of heaven. For that very humble and
afflicted state, against which they were
so much prejudiced, was really the fittest
and the most proper one in which the
Messiah could have appeared. None could
have been more suitable, either to the per-
fections of God, or the circumstances of
men. This the inspired apostle affirms, to
the Hebrews, in the words of my text. "For
"it became him, (says he,) for whom are all
"things, and by whom are all things, in bring-
"ing many sons into glory, to make the cap-

"taint of their salvation perfect through sufferings." This assertion, which has always appeared so paradoxical to the prejudiced and unbelieving part of mankind, we proposed, in a former course, to elucidate and confirm. And for this purpose we were to shew, that the humble, suffering state of Christ was expedient,

First, To put beyond suspicion the truth of his mission.

SECONDLY, To exhibit him as a perfect pattern of virtue to his followers.

THIRDLY, To make him a proper propitiation for our sins.

FOURTHLY, To make room for his bringing more fully to light a future state of immortality and glory.

And, LASTLY, To give us full assurance that he knows, and sympathises with our frailties, and our sorrows, and will therefore mercifully intercede with the Father in our behalf.

The three first of these we have already endeavoured to illustrate.

We have shewn, that the humble, afflicted condition of Jesus, placed beyond suspicion the truth of his mission, because it afforded men of all ranks an opportunity of freely examining his pretensions, and demonstrated to them that he entertained none of those worldly, ambitious views, by which impostors are usually impelled. In a particular manner, it evinced that he was really the divine person whom he pretended to be, by the triumphant glory and success which his religion so soon obtained. For the weaker and more pitiful our Saviour was in the eyes of the world, the more manifestly did the power which attended him appear to be of God. We said, in the second place,—That his sufferings were expedient to render him a perfect pattern of virtue and of excellence. Had his life not been diversified with sorrow, we should not have considered him as a man of the same nature with ourselves, and therefore, could not have viewed his life as a proper model for us to follow. Besides, there would have been many virtues, such as patience, fortitude, and

resignation, which his example could not have displayed. Indeed, the whole of his character would have been much less noble and sublime. It is the nature of virtue to brighten in distress. The more it is oppressed and afflicted, the more exalted and glorious does it appear. It was also mentioned, that the sufferings of Christ were expedient, perhaps indispensable, to make him a proper propitiation for the offences of mankind. It seems to be one of the established laws of heaven, that without submission to sorrow—nay, without shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sins. Forgiveness without an atonement, might inspire the subjects of God's government, with disadvantageous notions of his wisdom, and his justice : it might tend to embolden offenders, and multiply crimes. But without farther presuming what was formerly said, we shall now proceed, in the fourth place, to shew, that the sufferings of Jesus were expedient, to make room for his bringing more fully to light, a future state of immortality and glory. Their expediency in this respect, will appear, whether we consider them as preparing the way for a fuller demonstration of the existence of this future state, or

as making out more clearly the path which conducts to it

First, Let us consider their expediency, in order to prepare the way for a fuller demonstration of its existence.

That death is not the extinction of our being, seems to be the natural sentiment of the human mind. We cannot bear the idea of falling into nothing. While the soul exults in the prospect of an endless existence, it is filled with dread—it is seized with horror at the thought of annihilation. And these hopes—these longings of nature, seem to be countenanced by our worthiest conceptions of the attributes of deity. Would infinite wisdom and goodness, have formed a being like man only to exist for a few days? Would his benevolent creator have endowed him with such exalted powers and capacities, and given him so short a period to exert and to improve them? Consider also the present unequal distribution of things. Vice often in this world prospers and triumphs, while virtue is despised, and oppressed, and afflicted. But if a God of righteousness governs the Universe, we

expect there will be another, and a better state, where these seeming disorders will be rectified—where vice will be punished, and virtue blessed and rewarded. These we think are nothing more than the just conclusions of unbiased reason; but alas! when we consult the analogy of nature, how strangely do they appear contradicted! Every thing in this inferior system, seems to be formed only for destruction. The flowers of the field wither, and never revive. The trees of the forest fall, and they rise no more. The inferior animals return to their kindred earth, and no living fire ever kindles their ashes again. Man lieth down in the dust, and what certainty have we that he shall ever arise? The appearance of his own frame, as well as of every object around him, afford but little hope. The faculties of mind seem to be dependent upon the state of the body. They grow with its growth, and strengthen with its strength. When the latter decays, the former appears to decay also. The pulse stops; the breath goeth out, and the spirit at the same time seems to be for ever extinguished.

Such are the endless doubts and perplexities, in which unassisted reason is involved. The arguments on both sides seem so equally balanced, that she is uncertain to which she ought to lean. How important then—how necessary a light from heaven to remove her doubts, and unfold to her that future world, which, unaided, she cannot descry. Accordingly, when Jesus appeared upon earth, he brought the gladsome tidings of eternal life to bewildered men. He reinstated nature in her hopes, and dispelled the darkness with which she was encompassed. He revealed the heaven of heavens to mortal view, and poured unclouded light upon the path of immortality. Without perplexing the mind with tedious, intricate reasonings, he confirmed our faith by express and explicit promises. “I am,”
“(says he) the resurrection and the life, and
“he that believeth in me shall never die.
“This body will indeed drop into the dust;
“but the soul, his better part, shall escape
“unhurt; and even the body itself shall be
“one day rescued from the dishonours of
“the grave, and restored to life immortal and
“glorious.” And lest his promises should fail to produce their due effect, he confirms

them by the most convincing proof, an astonished world ever beheld. He himself submits to suffer the pangs of dissolution, lies down in the chambers of the tomb; but soon rises again victorious, visibly ascends into heaven, and leads captivity captive. Thus did he place the doctrine of a future life, upon a foundation which nothing could overturn. He promised us that we should not for ever remain the prey of corruption, and as a proof, that what he promised he was able to perform, he himself arose from the tomb. This is an evidence by far the most satisfactory, that the human mind could obtain. For what can be a more striking proof of immortality, than to see one of our own nature rising from the dead, and taking possession of it? What so proper to convince us, that the promises of eternal life are true, as to behold Him, who delivered them, himself coming forth triumphant from the grave, and visibly ascending into heaven before us. Were the most stubborn infidel left to chuse for himself, a proof of his future existence, would it be possible for him to desire a plainer, and a more perfect demonstration. But it is evident, that had not Jesus suffered and

expired, this visible, striking demonstration could not have been afforded. — Not without first dying, how could he have risen from the dead? And had he not risen from the dead, what indubitable security could we have had of life, and immortality? Clouds and darkness would have still surrounded us, and the night of death closed over our heads, without our being certain whether any morning was awaiting us. — But by some, who are captious and slow of heart to believe, it may still be inquired, was there indeed no other way, in which the Son of God could have clearly demonstrated immortality to the world, than by himself previously enduring the agonies of dissolution, and descending into the tomb? Might not he have been visibly translated to heaven, say they, without ever tasting of death? And would not this have reflected more honour upon himself, and with equal plainness unfolded their future destination to his followers. — But to such we reply, that had Christ been taken up into heaven without dying, we could not have had in him, as we now have, an example and pledge of our resurrection. — The translation of a person without suffering death, may indeed

be an evidence of another state or world, but can afford no evidence, that those who die, shall be raised again, and received into that world. The resurrection alone of our Saviour, could give us full assurance of this consolatory truth. But unless he had first submitted to death, it is impossible that this great, decisive proof, of our resurrection and immortality, could ever have been given. And as his death appears to be in this respect previously necessary, so also does that life of poverty and affliction, which led to it, and which indeed was the visible, secondary cause of it. For had Jesus appeared in the power and splendour of an earthly monarch, the Jews would undoubtedly have embraced him as their Messiah, and never sought his crucifixion. But by being poor and afflicted, he was rejected with indignant contempt, and with cruel hands crucified and slain. And this was the way prepared, for his confirming in the minds of his followers, the hopes of eternal life, by his own resurrection from the grave, and ascension into glory. Hereby was an opportunity afforded him, of abolishing death, of vanquishing him that had the power of death, and delivering those who,

from the fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. The good man, then, need no longer live in painful suspense about his future existence. Knowing that his Redeemer, who once suffered and died, that he might again rise and live, is now actually risen, and for ever liveth and reigneth, the christian may rejoice in hope, and be patient in tribulation. He may pass through this life, possessing his soul in peace, and go down into the grave fearless of evil. But the sufferings and death of Christ, were not only expedient, to prepare the way for a full demonstration of the existence of a future state of glory, they were expedient, also, to point out, in a more striking manner, the way by which that glory is obtained. The object of the Deity seems to be not merely to communicate happiness, but to form his creatures to moral excellence. He hath designed them for a state of immortal felicity : but before they enter upon that state, he hath made it necessary, that they shall have acquired virtuous habits : and to acquire again their virtuous habits, he hath ordained them to pass through a painful course of discipline. And the more painful and difficult this course becomes,

the poorer will be their virtue, and the richer their reward. This important truth, which men have too often willingly hid from their eyes, it was expedient that Jesus Christ should exhibit to them by his own example. He himself was to be crowned with honour by his Father; but previous to his receiving it, it was right that, as a lesson to the world, he should merit it by his obedience. And as his crown was to be brighter than that of any of his followers, it was proper that his obedience should likewise appear more perfect and excellent. But this it could only do, by being exposed to more fiery trials, and standing severer conflicts. Before, then, the Captain of our Salvation was exalted on high, it was fit that he should be humbled and abased. Before he reached the joy that was set before him, it was expedient that he should pass through much tribulation and sorrow. Before he rose to heaven, and there entered into his glory, it behoved him to lead a life of indigence and obscurity, and make his exit with ignominy and with pain,

For by this he made known to Christians in every age, one of the most valuable

truths which they could learn. He thus taught them, that the adversities of life were necessary to moral improvement—that their sufferings on earth, were connected with their enjoyments in heaven, and that through the valley of tears lay the road to the regions of immortality and glory.

Thus previously expedient were Christ's sufferings, to bring more fully to light a future state of happiness. They both prepared the way, for his affording us a more striking proof of the existence of such a state, and also marked out, in a more conspicuous manner, the path which conducts to it.

We now proceed, in the LAST PLACE, to shew, that our Saviour's sufferings were also expedient, to give us full assurance that he knows, and sympathizes with our frailties and our sorrows, and will therefore mercifully intercede with the Father in our behalf.

Human life, to all, is a state of trial and distress. And to afford proper support, and

encouragement to us while in this state, was one of the great objects of Christ's undertaking. With this view, he hath assumed the office of our mediator, or patron with God,—hath sat down at his right hand, to plead our cause, to unfold our wants, and by virtue of his own merits, to offer up and recommend our humble requests. But before entering upon this great office, it was expedient that he should be consecrated to it by sufferings, in order to render him the more proper object of our trust and confidence. For to whom do we, in the day of affliction, look up, for such mercy and compassion, as from those who have been afflicted themselves? From the ever prosperous and gay, we expect but little comfort, for them we deem unacquainted with our case, and therefore heedless of our complaints. But to such as have been our companions in woe, we hasten to unbosom our griefs—to tell all our sorrows, because we naturally suppose, that the remembrance of their own, will prompt them to shew sympathy for ours. This then being the case, how wisely was it ordered for our consolation, that He, who was to be our great friend, and mediator in the

heavens, should be a fellow sufferer with ourselves, while he lived upon the earth. For are we not led, with unsuspecting confidence, to hope, that he will therefore be more apt to sympathize with those whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren, and be more inclined to send relief to them, when struggling with those manifold evils, of which he himself once bore a part. This propriety of our Saviour's knowing by experience, the frailties and affliction of our nature, the Apostle expressly asserts to the Hebrew believers, and indeed to the whole Jewish nation, in the same Epistle out of which the words of our text are taken. "Wherefore, (saith he,) in all things it behoved him, that is Christ, to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: For, in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them, who either suffer or are tempted*." From his experience of our trials, we are assured he hath not only the power, but the inclination to succour

* Heb. ii, 17, 18.

us. He knows well where our weakness lies, where our burden presses, and what will prove most proper for supporting and relieving us. "Let us hold fast our profession (saith the same Apostle,) for we have "not an high priest who cannot be touched "with the feeling of our infirmities; but "was in all points tempted like as we are, "yet without sin.*" He is one who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, BECAUSE, he was taken from among men, and himself compassed with infirmity. Though he was a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.

But could not Jesus, it may be said, have perfectly known our nature, without actually assuming it? Would he not have been sufficiently acquainted with our infirmities, and afflictions, though he himself had never come down into our world, to submit to them? Or can we ever suppose, that his mercy and compassion were so de-

fective towards us, as to require the personal experience of our sorrow, to excite and to improve them?—No. Let the impious thought be far from us. The blessed Jesus knew perfectly our frame, before he descended to the earth: Neither did he stand in need of being prompted to compassion, by the experience of human woe. And when we at any time loosely say—that from his own sorrows he hath learned to compassionate ours, our meaning only is—that from his own sorrows, he hath given us a proof, that he will compassionate ours. It behoved him to assume our nature, with all its sinless frailties, not to acquire any new acquaintance with it; but only to shew us that he was fully acquainted with it. It became him to endure the severest sufferings, not to incline *him* to be more merciful to our sufferings; but only to convince and satisfy us, that he would be merciful.

Distrust and suspicion naturally arise in the breasts of the afflicted. Prospects which delight the souls of others, have often no comforts for them. Disquieting thoughts—desponding fears alone, are apt to take

possession of their 'weak' and 'melancholy' minds. The representations, indeed, given of the Deity in Scripture, afford much reason for confiding in his goodness. But this goodness, being the attribute of an Almighty, Eternal Being, who dwelleth in the secret place of thunder, whom no eye hath seen or can see, the confidence which it inspires is mingled with awe, and liable, especially in the hours of distress, to be overwhelmed with dread. The timid mind requires an object for its confidence, whose nature is more level to its apprehension, and removed at a less distance from its own. And for this, as well as for other reasons, we may conclude it was, that our Lord and Saviour condescended to veil his divinity in a humble—human form. Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, Christ himself likewise took part of the same. He desired to shade and soften, if we may so speak, the greatness of his Deity, and to become in all things like unto his brethren—to be subjected to their corporeal frailties—to be acquainted with their griefs, and familiarized with their sorrows. And being thus allied to them by the same common nature, he hath encouraged them

to come more boldly to the throne of grace. He hath shewn them that he is their patron and their friend—that in all the afflictions wherewith they are afflicted, he bears towards them the bowels of a man, while his power to save them is that of a God. Instead then, of the blessed Jesus being rejected, because of his participation of our sufferings, he ought rather, on this very account, to be the “*Desire of all nations.*” For his sufferings tend, in the most effectual manner, to allay our fears, and confirm our hopes. They administer abundant consolation to the Christian soul. They let open a fountain of unspeakable joy, into the valley of tears. And name, O ye enemies of our faith! the situation of anxiety and distress, in which this joy and consolation may not be successfully applied. Are we, for example, dejected with a deep sense of the debility of our moral powers, and the languor of our pious affections? We justly hope, that the merciful Jesus will make all possible allowance for our infirmities, because he has an experimental knowledge of our frame, and remembers that we are dust. Or is it our

lot, to bend beneath a load of poverty and distress? We recollect, that our Redeemer himself was once a man of sorrows—that he was our brother in affliction, and that notwithstanding his high exaltation, he still retains for us a brother's sympathy. Are we, in fine, surrounded with numerous difficulties, and assailed with divers temptations? We are animated with the delightful thought—that he who had full experience of the weakness and dangers of humanity, is ready to assist, and to support us.

From that height of glory, to which he is raised, he beholds our distress—hears our supplications, and is ever making intercession for us. These, saith he, are my faithful followers, labouring up that steep and rugged path, which I once trod, and contending with those formidable foes, whom I myself once encountered. Now I am no more in the world: but these are in the world. Holy Father! thine they were, and thou gavest them me. Keep them through thine own name. Sanctify them through thy truth. Keep them from the evil one;

that they may be where I am, and may behold the glory which thou hast given me*.

Such, then, you see is the edification—the improvement—the comfort, which we derive from the humiliation and sufferings of Christ. And from what hath been said, may we not be allowed with confidence to affirm, in opposition to a carnal and unbelieving world, that they were most wise and expedient. The Almighty, intending both the promotion of his own glory, and also the restoration of fallen man, appointed, from the beginning, a suffering Saviour, as the most proper mean for accomplishing these great and important ends. And to prepare the world for the reception of this Saviour, he inspired the prophets and righteous men of old, to predict him under this character. Accordingly, we find him by them described, as one who was to be despised and rejected of men; as a man oppressed with sorrows, and worn out with grief, and at last closing his unexampled life, like the sheep led forth, in patient and submissive silence, to the slaughter. But not only

were these things simply predicted to beset him ; they were also represented as indispensably requisite. "From the beginning, the wisdom of the Eternal announced to men, that their redemption could be effected by no other means, nor satisfaction be made for their sins upon any other terms. Trusting, then, that you are now fully convinced, that the sufferings and death of Christ, instead of being incompatible with his character and office, were in truth most expedient, and perhaps inevitable. I shall now conclude, with briefly deducing a few inferences from the subject.

And, FIRST, from the doctrine which we have now illustrated, what reason have we to admire the wisdom of God ? Surely, saith the Apostle to the Gentiles, (speaking of this very subject—our redemption by Christ,) " God hath therein abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." He hath devised a plan for our recovery, which human wisdom could never have thought of. It is a plan indeed, which some rash and inconsiderate mortals have censured as folly ; but which more modest and patient inquirers

reverence, and adore. Nay, the blessed angels in heaven, we are told, those purely intelligent, and discerning beings, look into it with astonishment. The spirits of just men made perfect, cease not day and night admiring it. And even we on earth, O God! amidst all our darkness, are able to discern, in some measure, its fitness and its wisdom. We see, that it is admirably adapted to confirm our faith, to improve our nature, to comfort our souls, and, in a consistency with the honour of thy perfections, to bring many returning sinners unto glory.

But this subject, while it leads us to admire the wisdom of God, demonstrates to us also, in a most striking manner, the deep malignity of sin. For if such a remedy as the sufferings and death of Christ, was, in the councils of heaven, deemed necessary to be employed against it, how evil and pernicious must its nature be!—how odious in the sight of God, and how destructive of the order and happiness of the whole creation! Let us then hate sin, with a perfect hatred. Let it no more appear in our lives; let its very existence be extinguished in our hearts.

In the LAST PLACE. Did it behove Jesus to be made perfect through sufferings, then let us, who are his disciples, learn to submit to our sufferings with patience, and consider them as a requisite part of our education for heaven: Certain intermixtures of adversity, appear to be proper, for exercising our virtue, and preparing us for immortality. Our Saviour himself, went up to the throne of God by the steps of sorrow: And that multitude who stand before him, have all come out of great tribulation: And when we have such companions, let us learn to be reconciled to the hardships of our lot. Under the guidance of our Divine leader, let us pursue the path marked out to us, with a patient, a strenuous, and a steady mind. Aided by his spirit, and animated by his example, let us bravely fight the good fight of faith, and suffer no appearance of difficulty—no form of danger—no face of death, to shake our hope of immortality. Thus shall we be approved of as good soldiers, by the Captain of our Salvation, and have the felicity to be numbered with those many souls whom he is now bringing into glory.—*Amen.*

THE

RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

*He is not here, for he is risen, as he said,—Come
see the place where the Lord lay.*

MY BRETHREN,

IT was but a little before this, that a deed had been committed, the most nefarious in the annals of the world. A deed at which the earth did quake—the rocks rent—the graves were opened, and the sun in the heavens, as ashamed, hid his face. The heathen's rage had been exhausted—the designs of Jewish malignity had been accomplished—the shepherd was smitten, and the sheep were scattered. Left by his

friends—betrayed into the hands of his enemies—the prince of peace had cruelly suffered—the Lord of glory on a cross had publicly expired; and his body obtained of the Roman governor, had, by the pious care of an honourable Counsellor, been laid low in the grave. All was now invested in the thickest gloom. The light of Christianity seemed set for ever. Buoyed up by their own false ideas of temporal splendour, the hopes of the poor Christian pilgrims had all died with their master; and they were now sunk into despair. Their spirits were overwhelmed—their souls were overcome—the expected glory seemed departed—their Comforter was gone. Never expecting to behold the face of their master any more, they were now, we are told by Luke the Evangelist, about to leave Jerusalem, and under the faintings of a sorrow-broken heart, to return to their old employments, from which they were taken.

But while all this was happening—while the few scattered disciples were desponding—while the Jews and the Heathen were proudly exulting—lo ! the Scriptures were

fulfilling—the counsels of heaven were performing—and the great work of God, the redemption of the world, was going on. Yes; for says Matthew, “ In the end of “ the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards “ the first day of the week, came Mary “ Magdalene and the other Mary, to see “ the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a “ great earthquake; for the angel of the “ Lord descended from heaven, and came “ and rolled back the stone from the door, “ and sat upon it; and said unto the wo-“ men, fear not ye, for I know that ye seek “ Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, “ for he is risen, as he said;—Come see the “ place where the Lord lay.”—Reviving words to the disconsolate Maries,—glad-
some tidings to all the scattered sorrowing disciples! Jesus whom you seek is not here, “ He is risen.” Weep then no longer for him., He holds his enemies in derision. He has burst the barriers of death—this holy one has not seen corruption. The son of God, he has triumphed over the tomb —and shortly he will yet enter into his kingdom. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. His death made a part of heaven’s wondrous plan, and his *rising again*

is only the fulfilment of his own prediction. Let it not be thought incredible.—Come—see, and believe—see the place where the Lord lay.——Brethren, what holy disciples rejoiced to hear—what angels delighted to proclaim—let us with gratitude contemplate. While we glory in the cross, let us also triumph in the resurrection. And that we may triumph not only with the spirit, but with the understanding likewise, let us now seriously consider its evidence—its importance—its salutary influence.

First, Let us consider its evidence.

Never was there stronger evidence for any fact, for stronger cannot be, than the evidence we can adduce for the resurrection of our Master. The truth of this miraculous fact, is placed beyond the possibility of doubt,—from the precautions previously taken to prevent it,—from the character of those who witnessed it—and the holy persevering fortitude, with which they declared it. The body of Jesus, after being taken down from the cross, was confessedly laid in a tomb, a tomb hewn out in a rock, and

which, according to the manner of the Jews, had a great massy stone rolled to the door of it. The scribes and pharisees, not satisfied with this, but remembering the words of Jesus, "After three days, will I rise again," took care to make the tomb still more secure, by sealing it, and setting a watch, not of friends, but of enemies, strictly to guard it. Yet notwithstanding this careful sealing of the tomb, and thus guarding it with all possible precaution—notwithstanding this, in the morning of the third day, the body is actually gone—nothing left but the "napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped up together by itself." The question there is this—how came the body of Jesus to be removed, and by what means? This could not be done, nor even connived at, by the soldiers, for they too were professed foes; were besides appointed to be its vigilant guards, and were to answer for it, at the peril of their lives. Neither could it have been done by the disciples, for they, a few poor despised individuals, and totally destitute, both of the power and inclination, to effect such a desperate purpose, were now all scattered

abroad, and had given up their late Lord and master as finally lost. No other account can be credited, save that which the Scriptures contain, and which on the spot was fully published, which the Christians openly declared, and which even the guards themselves, ere they were corrupted, freely confessed and solemnly deposed. A great earthquake, they pled, had happened—an angel from heaven had descended, with a countenance like lightning, and raiment white as snow, he rolled back the stone—Jesus who was crucified, came forth from the tomb, and they, the panic struck keepers, did quake, and become as dead men. The malignant story which they were afterwards bribed to give out, by the influence of money, was not only directly false: but, as we might expect, a lie against God to be—self contradictory. The chief priests and elders, after taking counsel together, prevail on them to say—(O wretched tools of villainy!) “ His disciples came “ by night, and stole him away, while we “ slept. And if this come to the Gover-“ nor’s ears.”—added the sacerdotal hy-
pocrites, to embolden those victims of ini-
quity, “ we will persuade him and secure

" you. So they took the money—(O infernal bargain!) and did as they were taught; " and this saying, is commonly reported " among the Jews until this day."—Strong indeed must be that delusion which could lead any, even the most credulous, to believe this bungled lie—a lie flatly contradicting the soldiers' own first confession—contradicting *itself*, and by representing them as bearing witness, to what supposes them *awake* to see, and yet themselves acknowledging they were *sleeping*—contradicting their own, and the chief-priests' completest conviction—yea, contradicting the testimony of God himself, felt in the earthquake, not only by the Sanhedrim, but by all Jerusalem. But mark the evidence of this fact, as arising not only from its corroborative circumstances, but also from the previous incredulity and subsequent faith and fortitude of its witnesses. What we are beforehand disposed to admit, we are very easily brought fully to credit. Whereas, what we have not only no expectation will take place, but are even strongly prejudiced against, overpowering evidence only can constrain us to believe. Let us apply this to the case before us. The Apostle,

had no idea of the death of Jesus—it accorded not with their high formed secular expectations—and having no prospects of his death—they consequently had no previous hopes of his resurrection, notwithstanding all his own repeated, and most explicit declarations. The notion of a *temporal prince*, held strong possession of their minds; to the last they flattered themselves, “that this was he who should ‘redeem Israel.’”—And when they suffered the deep and sudden disappointment of their fondly formed views, they became abandoned to despair, never looking for the resurrection and its glories, to succeed an event so terrible and ignominious as the death of the cross. Accordingly, the first publication of the joyful tidings, they heard as an idle incredible tale, which made no reviving impression upon their minds. Nay, the first time they saw him alive, they were afraid, and thought they had seen a spirit. Their strong incredulity could hardly be overcome, even by the decisive evidence of their senses. And therefore, in condescension to their obstinate prejudices, and fully and for ever to establish a fact of such vast importance, we find their

gracious master, favouring them not with one; but, at least, seven different and familiar appearances—that to Mary at the sepulchre—that to the two disciples at Emmaus—that to ten of the Apostles, the very evening after he arose—that to the eleven, eight days after, when he removed the faithlessness of Thomas—that to seven of the disciples, at the sea of Tiberias—that to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part were alive, when the Apostle Paul wrote his Epistle to the Corinthians—and last of all, that to this Apostle himself likewise, “as to one born ‘out of due time.’” Thus, on sundry and divers occasions, having seen again their lately crucified Jesus, the few dispirited Apostles, who but a little before cowardly left him in danger, who durst not own him in the high priest’s hall, who durst not come within the shadow of his cross, nor within the sight of his sepulchre, lo! even these, now instantly shake off their fears, feel their breasts beat high with heavenly hopes, and armed with invincible courage. Emerging from the lurking places of Jerusalem, and the dark retreats of the mountain of Olives, from east to west.

from north to south, they with exulting hearts, go spreading the glorious news, boldly asserting their risen Saviour's cause, challenging the most virulent opposer, to disprove their words, charging even the chief rulers to their face, with the atrocious crimes of envy, malice, and murder; commanding them to repent, while there was room for repentance, and believe the testimony of Jesus. And doing all this in opposition to every consideration of interest—of reputation, of ease—in the face of want, reproach, persecution, and even death itself, under its most terrible forms. Now, what but the most perfect conviction—what but a heartfelt sense of the truth—what but a feeling of the power, of that resurrection, of which they were the witnesses, could thus, in the presence of wicked men and devils, have animated and supported those holy men? They themselves could not be deceived, for their acquaintance with the person, manner, and conversation of Jesus, had been close and intimate; to them, none could counterfeit his appearance, and their faith in his resurrection had been formed in opposition to the most stubborn prejudices. No assignable motives

could impel them to deceive others ; for nothing but ignominy, persecution, and death, were to be expected in persevering to bear testimony to Jesus, and his resurrection. Yet none of these things could move them from their purpose : reproaches, scourgings, imprisonments, cruelties, tortures, death in all its forms, could not all, once force them to withdraw their evidence, or desist from teaching in the name of Jesus.

" Ye men of Israel," said the Apostle Peter, standing up with the eleven, " hear these words : Jesus of Nazareth, a man ap-
" proved of God among you, by miracles
" and wonders, and signs, which God did
" by him, in the midst of you, as ye your-
" selves also know. Him, being delivered
" by the determinate counsel, and fore-
" knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by
" wicked hands have crucified and slain.
" Whom God hath raised up, having loosed
" the pains of death, because it was not
" possible he should be holden of it. This
" Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all
" are witnesses. And, the same day there
" were added to them, about three thou-
" sand souls."—Acts, ii., 22, 23, 24, 32,
41.

But, besides this incontrovertible evidence, arising from the character, history, and circumstances of the Apostles, and primitive Christians, we have, even to these latter days, another and plainer, yea, a palpable and instructive evidence; for if Jesus be not risen, then he has never yet ascended up into heaven. But he has ascended; for the Holy Ghost, the Comforter promised, solely, upon his ascension, has actually come down. He came down upon the Apostles, to communicate a power to perform signal signs, and mighty miracles, and he comes down still, as he did upon them, too, in his sanctifying and comforting influences, into the hearts of all true believers. Christians, I appeal to you; do you not feel, by your happy experience, his enlightening, quickening, and gladdening operations?—Do you not know that Christ is risen indeed, by your souls being born again from above—raised from the death of sin, to a divine life of righteousness, and true holiness? Blessed characters. Your faith in the resurrection of Jesus, rests not merely on external evidence—you have the witness within yourselves. It is lodged inviolable in your own bosoms,

which fears not the force of opposing arguments, and which defies the ten thousand cavils of wretched infidels. Dispute the resurrection !! Sooner might we dispute the evidence of our senses. No ; we rejoice in its influence, and already our uplifted souls sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

But consider not only its evidence ; attend also to its vast importance.—Christians ! since Christ is actually risen, this demonstrates the validity of his claims ; the Father's acceptance of his sacrifice ; his complete conquest of all our enemies ; and the safety of our reliance upon all his promises.

In the FIRST PLACE, The resurrection of Jesus, is an event of primary importance, as it demonstrates the validity of his claims. He claimed the character of the Messiah of the Jews, and the Saviour of the world : of the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. These were high claims, and to demonstrate their justness, to complete the conviction of his friends; and to leave

his enemies without excuse, he oft appealed to his rising again from the dead, as the last and decisive proof he would give the world, of the truth of his mission, of his religion, and of all that he had spoken. "A wicked and adulterous generation, " seeketh after a sign, and there shall no "sign be given unto it, but the sign of the " Prophet Jonas." Again, "Destroy (says "he) this temple of my body, and in three "days I will raise it up." Had not Christ then risen as he said, all his pretensions must have proved to be imposture. But rising as he did, he declared himself, "to "be the son of God with power." Yes! with power indeed. He was not passively as a creature raised; but by his own almighty strength, triumphantly arose; and thus verified that singular saying, "I lay "down my life, that I may take it again. "I have power to lay it down, and I have "power to take it again." The foundation then of our faith standeth sure. The figments of falsehood shall pass away; but, while God is the same, this cannot be shaken. · Christ is risen, puts at once to silence all wicked unbelieving men; proclaims the truth of our Redeemer's mission;

the divinity of his person ; the high, the heavenly origin, of the whole of our most holy religion.

But consider the resurrection of Jesus, not only as vindicating the validity of his claims ; but as also demonstrating the Father's acceptance of his sacrifice. Our salvation is every where in Scripture, ascribed to our Redeemer's death and passion ; but its divine efficacy is evinced to us only by his glorious resurrection. As our sacrifice, his innocent blood was shed ; as a ransom for many ; his life was offered ; but it is only by his rising from the dead, that our proof arises, that the ransom availed, and that the sacrificed was accepted. *Death is the wages of sin*, and when we see Jesus descending into the prison of the grave, and then returning free from its fetters, we must infer that those wages are paid, unless we would deny that his death was *for our sins* ; and then, why did he, holy and harmless as he was, die at all ? Or unless we would deny, that death is *the wages of sin* ; and then we must deny the Scriptures, and throw them aside as of no avail. But he *did die for our sins* ; his death was our pay-

ment ; while his resurrection published our discharge, and was thus "for our justification." On his descent to earth, we behold the work of redemption begun ; but it is not till his return from the tomb, that we hail the completion of the wondrous plan. At his birth, the angels conjoined their heavenly voices, and this was their blissful song : " Glory to God in the highest, and " on earth peace, good will towards men :" And now on his resurrection, we can take up the Apostle's heroic challenge, and, responding to the angelic choir, add this our concluding strain, " Who shall lay any " thing to the charge of God's elect ? It is " God that justifieth ; who is he that con- " demneth ? It is Christ that died, yea " rather, that is risen again, who is even at " the right hand of God ; who also maketh " intercession for us." Christians, be glad and rejoice, at your Lord's rising from the tomb. He has thus confirmed your faith, and finished your redemption. You are now complete in him. To you there is no condemnation.

The resurrection demonstrates, likewise, his complete conquest of all our enemies.

The Devil, who had been cast out of heaven, and was now in the flesh, was filled with rage at the loss of his power, and resolved to revenge himself upon the Son of God. He placed himself in the way of those who were going to the cross, and, by night, in the garden of Gethsemane, he watched over Jesus. His hellish heart abominated the Son of God, and, therefore, he made one continual attack upon our Lord himself in the wilderness, and never relinquishing his malignant purpose, he entered into the heart of Jesus, and, knowing the whole mass of wickedness he found there, to one dreadful point of treachery, ceased not till he brought our blessed Redeemer to the ignominious cross. Their joy, such as devils feel, filled the infernal regions. Satan and his associates, triumphed in their supposed success against the Lord's anointed, and his scheme for human happiness. But with what horrible astonishment were they seized which the third day morning reversed all their fancied conquests. The death of Christ proved then but the prelude to his joys. From the grave, he came back laden with the spoil of victory. He rose—he rose—trampled under foot the throne of hell, and entered into his glory. Christian, thou art still in the field of battle, but thou hast only

to fight with a vanquished enemy. In the world, thou shalt indeed have tribulation : but both the world, and the prince of the world, are overcome by thy victorious King, and although they may be permitted to distress, they shall never overwhelm thee. Jesus hath ascended up on high, and led captivity captive. "Fear not," is his voice from heaven, "I am he that liveth, and "was dead, and liveth for evermore, and "have the keys of hell and of death."

Which leads me to say, in fine,—See in the resurrection of Jesus, not only the validity of his claims, the Father's acceptance of his sacrifice, his complete conquest of all our enemies—See also the safety of your reliance on all his promises. "Let "not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe "in God, believe ye also on me. I will be "with you to the end of the world. Seek "ye first the kingdom of God and his "righteousness, and all other good things "shall be added unto you. I will give you "eternal life. Whosoever liveth, and be- "liveth in me, shall never die." He who burst the bars of death, and rose triumph- ant, as he said, will assuredly fulfil every

other promise, and, O Christian! withhold no needful blessing from you. Through life he will never leave you nor forsake you; in death, his rod and staff will support and comfort you. And though your frame must moulder away, and be scattered with the dust of former generations, yet death shall not finally prevail against you. No. As sure as Christ himself arose, so sure shall he, one day, quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you. That spirit which he arose to send, by which his people were quickened, when dead in trespasses and sins, by which they are animated, directed, and invigorated in their christian warfare, shall, at the appointed period, as by an internal principle, raise their "vile bodies, and fashion them "like unto his own glorious body." Hence believers are described as "the children "of the resurrection. Their life is hid with "Christ in God, and when Christ, who is "their life shall appear, then shall they "also appear with him in glory*." Let then my body decay, let the burden of mortality press hard upon me; let my dearest com-

forts steal from under me ; the partners of my tender hours ; the friends who are as my own soul, be wrench'd from me, I will not despond : Jesus my hope, is "the resurrection and the life;" "The first fruits of them that sleep." And because he lives, we and our friends, and all who sleep in Jesus, shall live also ; live with him, the fountain of life—holy and happy, through all the length of immortality. "O death ! where is now thy sting—and where, O grave ! is now thy victory. Blessed Lord ! thanks, thanks be to thee, who hast given us the victory." O let us all go on in thy name, enlivened by the brightness of thy rising, and making mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only ! Brethren, are you the disciples of a risen Saviour : let your hearts ascend to the right hand of God, after him, seeking the things that are above, the glorious things he hath promised to them that love him. Blessed souls ! The high hope of immortality is set before them; Heaven's everlasting gates are open to receive them.

Sinners ! ye who still lie in spiritual death, in the grave of corruption, awake.

arise, call upon your God; see your imminent danger. While the righteous come forth "to the resurrection of life," you, without repentance, must come forth, "to the resurrection of damnation." Awake then—arise—arise, or be for ever fallen. Defer not till tomorrow. Tomorrow may see you sunk, and sunk for ever, into that gulph of misery, from which there is no redemption. Seek the Lord, while he is to be found, and call upon him while he is near, that through him, who is risen from the dead, and will quickly judge the world in righteousness, ye may yet be received into the kingdom. "O kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." O how your hearts would spring within you, and your hopes begin to bloom, did you but know him, and the power of his resurrection.

Ye who indeed know him, who are already risen with him, let your whole life, be a life of faith in his name; walk ever worthy of "the lively hope," to which you are begotten by the resurrection of

Jesus from the dead, and give all diligence to adorn his glorious doctrine. Backsliding from Jesus, forgetting him and his resurrection, how would your souls languish, your graces die, and every thing around you seem gloomy and barren as the wilderness ! But preserving inviolate your holy communion, looking unto him, the author and finisher of your faith, how the scene will brighten, all nature blossom and produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Keep then close fellowship with him. Seek his face continually. In the field of meditation, frequent his sacred tomb ; yes, on the feet of love, and with the eye of faith, oft come and see the *place* where the Lord did lie. Such an inviting place, not even paradise, with all its pleasures, could produce. It is the resurrection of our hopes. Its salutary virtue extends to every age. It has influence divine to joy the hearts of all generations. Here then, O my soul, will I come, when deadness seizes my spirits. Be here revived my languid powers. My lawless passions be buried here. For ever lie entombed my foolish fears. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ; they rest from their labours, and when they awake,

they are satisfied with his likeness. " Let
" the voice of rejoicing and salvation be in
" the tabernacles of the righteous, the right
" hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The
" right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right
" hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." " Re-
" joice not then against me, O mine ene-
" my; for though I fall by thy hand, I
" shall arise again; and when I lie in the
" darkness of the grave, even then the Lord
" will be a light unto me." " I know that
" my Redeemer liveth," And where he is,
" there I shall be also." " This corruptible
" shall put on incorruption, this mortal,
" immortality."

THE

REASONABLENESS OF THE ATONEMENT.

II COR. v 21

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

To enter into heaven, and be for ever with the Lord, is the distinguished felicity which is set before us : And it is a felicity of such a nature, that we cannot be too diligent, too solicitous, that in the end we may be so blessed as to obtain it. The Apostle Paul, was fully apprized of its greatness and its glory, and therefore, not only pressed forward to it, with the most unremit-

ting ardour himself, but exerted all his zeal to induce others to follow his example. His generous soul, wished not to enter into the kingdom of heaven alone. He was to be happy himself, and he desired from his heart, that all men might be partakers of his joy. In his father's house, he knew there were many mansions, and the object of all his labours was, that inhabitants innumerable might with him repair thither, and have everlasting life. And his anxiety that they should do so, proceeded not only from a knowledge of the sublime felicity which they would there receive, but also from a high sense of the extraordinary means, which had been employed to procure this felicity for them. These were no less, than the sufferings and death of the Son of God. He is consecrated the way, the truth, and the life, and all who come to the Father come by him. To this new and living way, therefore, the Apostle failed not to turn men's attention, nor could he for a moment remain indifferent, when he be held any inclined to neglect so great salvation. The love of Christ constrained him, to shew them their ingratitude, and their danger. Accordingly, with all the earnest-

ness of which he was capable, we here find him exhorting the Corinthians to mind the things necessary to their peace, inviting them to turn unto God, and praying them not to die in their sins. God, saith he, " hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors from Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." But lest a sense of demerit should fill them with despair, lest a consciousness of guilt, should make them dread, that this proposed reconciliation was impossible, he informs them that these fears are groundless, that this dreaded barrier to their salvation is removed, that the sufferings they merited have been endured, that the punishment of their sins has been paid, and an abundant entrance into felicity immortal opened: " For God, hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Thus you see, that the favour of their Creator here, and the enjoyment of his presence hereafter, was the supreme, the unspeakable happiness, to which the Apostle invited his brethren of mankind; and the words

of our text he here introduces, in order to shew them the sure, and indeed the only, foundation upon which they must rest their hopes of obtaining it.

If we then value as we ought, this supreme felicity, or duly regard that good and merciful Being who hath provided it, we cannot but esteem it a matter of the last importance, rightly to consider the meaning which these words convey, and the great truth which they contain. They are the words of Eternal Ease, and words, therefore, which we cannot too carefully examine, or be at too much pains thoroughly to understand. Their natural and most obvious import appears to be this.

“ The Almighty and All-merciful Father
“ of the human race, graciously purposed
“ to deliver his creatures, from that mi-
“ sery which, by their disobedience, they
“ had justly incurred, and to restore them
“ to that felicity which they had basely
“ forfeited : But seeing ‘that’ he could not,
“ consistently, accomplish this work of
“ mercy, without at the same time signally
“ displaying his justice, and manifesting

" his utter abhorrence of their crimes, he
" appointed Jesus, his well-beloved and on-
" ly begotten Son, to fulfil the obligations
" which they had broken, and suffer the
" penalty to which they were liable, ap-
" pointed him for this end, to descend for
" a season from the mansions of uncreated
" glory, to tabernacle among men, to sub-
" mit to a series of indescribable indigni-
" ties, and sorrows, and pains, from which
" the innocence and perfection of his nature
" otherwise exempted him ; and to do all
" this, not merely that he might have an
" opportunity of publishing, and ratifying
" to the world, a system of the most im-
" portant doctrines, and setting before them
" a pattern of the most perfect virtue ; but
" also to avert the wrath of heaven, to
" make peace by the blood of his cross, and
" present himself to God, as an offering
" for sin. Accordingly, this gracious pur-
" pose, which, in the councils of eternity
" was formed, hath, in the fulness of time,
" been executed. Christ, the second person
" of the glorious Trinity, hath become our
" mediator, and placed himself in our stead.
" In this capacity he hath actually submit-
" ted to the obligations of his people, and

" become responsible for their guilt. And
" thus, by his being made sin, or rather a
" sin offering for them; they are made the
" righteousness of God in him: that is,
" they are treated as righteous for his sake,
" they are freed from the curse of the law,
" they are acquitted from the sentence of
" death, and re-established in their title to
" eternal life."

This is the doctrine plainly delivered, in the passage now before us, and in numberless other passages of Sacred Writ. Yet this, however plainly taught, like most other plain truths, such is the strange perversity of man, hath had the unhappy fate to be disputed and denied. Though promulgated as the *wisdom* of God, to some it hath been, and unfortunately still is, a rock of offence, and has been branded by them, to their shame, with the name of *foolishness*. Blind or presumptuous, they have openly pronounced it to be both absurd and unnecessary, irrational to the extreme—unbecoming the God of heaven to reveal, and unworthy of us, his intelligent offspring, to receive. But let us be on our guard against such big swelling words of vanity, and be-

ware of attempting to be wise above what is written. Under the specious pretext of refining Christianity from corruptions, let us never abandon any of its peculiar doctrines, but closely adhere to the form of sound words ; and against all the insidious attempts of designing men, hold fast the profession of our faith. And that this steadfastness may neither be misinterpreted, nor misunderstood for the blindness of prejudice, or the obstinacy of folly, let us also shew, that we have duly examined what we zealously defend, and are qualified to vindicate the Gospel, against both the cavils of its avowed enemies, and the heresies of its pretended friends.

In this discourse, we shall endeavour to shew, that the doctrine of our text—the doctrine of the atonement, is a rational doctrine.

In attempting this, however, we mean not to say, either that unassisted reason could ever have discovered it, or that even now, when it is discovered, human reason can in all its parts fully comprehend it. For we confess, that it contains mysteries which

are beyond our search. It stands connected with causes which we cannot penetrate, and is productive of consequences which we cannot explore. But on this account, shall the fancied wisdom of man reject it, as inconsistent and absurd? In the rashness of folly it may, but in the maturity of reflection it cannot; for how many are the phenomena, even in the constitution of external nature, confessedly mysterious, phenomena which, though they command our assent, yet baffle all our researches, and defy our utmost penetration. If then, in the constitution of grace, which proceeds from the same author, we meet with similar difficulties, have we any just cause to be offended? Nay, consider the extraordinary change in the nature, and circumstances of man, for which this constitution provides, and the superior beings whose agency it implies, and say, if mysteries still more inexplicable than any to be found in the constitution of nature, are not to be expected? And such mysteries, far from militating against it, must, by every impartial thinking mind, be rather viewed as operating in its favour. For were every thing in it plain and perspicu-

ous, there might be some reason for suspecting, that it did not proceed from **HIM**, whose wisdom is *unsearchable*, and whose ways are *past finding out*. But by being in many things by us totally incomprehensible, it appears to be analogous to all the other works of God. Too deep for the contrivance of man, it evinces itself to be the plan of heaven : And undiscoverable by human reason, the presumption is, that the belief of it could take its rise, only from a divine and special revelation

If then, the death of Christ, as an atonement for sin, cannot be expected to be level to our limited comprehension, in its whole nature and its full extent ; it must therefore be enough, to make it merit the appellation of, *a doctrine according to reason*. if, in as much of it as the Almighty hath revealed, or we are capable of understanding, right reason can discern nothing, that is either inconsistent or superfluous, but, on the contrary, is necessarily led to approve it, as a mean proper and expedient, founded in the principles of justice, and wisely adapted for the accomplishment of the end to be obtained.

And this, I trust, will sufficiently appear, if we consider the Deity in his character of the great ruler of the universe, and ourselves as subjects of his moral government.

There is evidently a distinction between moral actions : All intelligent beings must perceive the distinction, and in consequence of this perception, approve of some actions as good and virtuous, as productive of order and happiness, and disapprove of others as evil and vicious, as productive of disorder and wretchedness. Now, this distinction, which all his rational creatures are capable of perceiving, God himself must also perceive, and that too as much more clearly than they do, as his understanding is more perfect than theirs. Therefore, he must entertain the highest *love* of what is good, and the utmost *abhorrence* of what is evil, and, consequently, must sincerely desire that all his children should *uniformly practice the former*, and *carefully avoid the latter* : that they should always pursue what alone constitutes true *excellence* and *felicity*, and for ever fly from what directly leads to *infamy* and *ruin*. That therefore, which

is dictated by reason, is at the same time confirmed by heaven, and what is the law of nature, is thus also the positive law of God : And by obeying this law, we act not only agreeably to the original differences of things; but also agreeably to HIM, by whom all things were constituted ; we not only conform to the directions of our own reason, but also obey the voice of Him, who is reason itself, and the author of all those several portions of it, which his creatures have received. We imitate, to the utmost of our power, the glories of his nature, do what we can to maintain the stability, and honour of his government, and may be said, in some measure, to co-operate with him in the accomplishment of the great plan of his providence.

But if obeying his will, may thus be considered as honouring God, for the same reason, disobeying his will must be considered as dishonouring him. For sin is a transgression of the law, and every transgression of the law, is a contempt of his authority, by whom the law was promulgated ; and the more wilful and deliberate the transgression, the more heinous and inexcusable must be the

contempt. Now, when such *presumptuous transgressions* are committed, when such *avowed contempt* is shewn, is it not highly reasonable, is it not absolutely necessary, that the Supreme should, in some way or other, *vindicate his authority*: Because for the same reason, that honour should be paid to the divine laws at all; for the same reason, should this honour be *repaired*, when infringed or violated by *wilful transgressors*. To suppose, that God requires obedience to his commandments, and yet, that he will not *support* their authority, against the disobedience of men; to suppose that he has constituted a government, and yet, that he will not *maintain* that constitution against the indignities offered to it by *presumptuous offenders*: is utterly inconsistent with all our most honourable conceptions of his character. For though it cannot indeed be denied, but that he may deal as mercifully with his creatures as he pleases, yet, this we are sure of, that he will never exercise his mercy in such a manner, as to hurt the interests of virtue, or defeat the great purposes of his moral government. But this, according to our conceptions, he would certainly do, did he pardon sinners,

without any satisfaction to his justice, without any public display of his coercive power, or any mark of his abhorence, stamped upon their guilt. For, from such unlimited indulgence, would they not have reason to infer, that the Almighty was not in reality so deeply concerned in their conduct, as was believed, and that rebellion against his government, was by no means so dreadful a thing as was generally apprehended. And thus, would they not soon lose all their remaining respect for his laws, and be openly encouraged to continue in their sins. To prevent, therefore, these direful consequences, our worthiest ideas of the justice and wisdom of God, necessarily lead us to conclude, that he will never behold his subjects rebel against him with impunity, nor suffer his laws, which are holy, and just, and good, to be trampled under foot, without maintaining his own honour, and vindicating their supreme authority. Now, the most obvious method of accomplishing this, is, by punishing the delinquents themselves. The soul that sinneth, he shall die. He shall suffer such a punishment, as shall both prevent himself from repeating his crime, and also effectually deter others from fol-

lowing his example.—This deduction I have judged it necessary previously to make, because, from slight or erroneous notions of *sin*, and the *nature of him* against whom it is committed, naturally proceed all our mistakes concerning the necessity or propriety of an atonement being made for it : but if this deduction be fairly formed, and I am confident it is, it cannot but be allowed, that when man rebelled against his Creator, both justice and wisdom required, that he should not be freely acquitted, but become obnoxious to some signal penalty. And as the penalty actually denounced, and justly merited, was death, the infliction of it must have been his everlasting destruction. But as the demands of justice are not incompatible with the calls of mercy, and as the God of justice taketh no pleasure in the death of his children, but rather wisheth that they should turn and live, is it not possible, that the sinner may be spared, and yet the ends of the law be fulfilled, and the honour of the lawgiver maintained? Or is the love of right in the Father of his creatures, indeed, so rigorous a principle, that nothing but the criminal suffering for ever in his own *person*, can

satisfy the vengeance provoked by his crimes? Rather, have we not reason to infer, that if a surety abler than the sinner himself can be found, one who is both willing to suffer the penalty threatened by the law, and also fully able by such suffering, to magnify the law, and make it honourable; rather, I say, if such a surety can be found, have we not reason to infer, that he will graciously be admitted in our stead, that upon him the merited punishment will be transferred; that by him, the impending wrath of heaven will be averted, and the gladsome tidings of pardon, and eternal life, to every true penitent, be proclaimed?

This it is impossible to deny, and yet, by granting it, we consequently grant, that the voluntary oblation of Jesus, in our behalf, might justly be accepted, that by this oblation, satisfaction for the guilty might be obtained, the forgiveness of sin, and the hopes of a blessed immortality extended, and all this without either any diminution to the lustre of the divine perfections, or the least prejudice to the great ends of the divine government.

Accordingly, the principle upon which this mode of procedure is founded, we find to be acknowledged in the judicial codes and practices of all the nations upon earth. Among no people, and in no country in the world, is not one man admitted, in certain cases, to be responsible for another, and, agreeable to the tenor of his obligation, adjudged, if necessary, to pay the penalty which that other may have incurred. The insolvent debtor, for instance, is often discharged by the generous interference of his friend, and delivered from all the evils, to which his insolvency would otherwise subject him.

In criminal cases, indeed, the same practice never obtains, and this circumstance may be what chiefly inclines some to regard satisfaction, by vicarious punishment, as always inconsistent and unjust. But were it *really* and *fundamentally* unjust, then it could be admitted in no case whatever, and one could no more be permitted to pay another's *debt*, than, by yielding up his own, he can be permitted to save another's *life*. But we can discover sufficient reasons, for admitting substitution in the former in-

stance, and rejecting it in the latter, without recurring to the idea of its being radically wrong. And, FIRST, his life is a blessing, which no man is authorised to part with at his pleasure, and which, therefore, none can have a right to surrender as a ransom for his brother. But, SECONDLY, supposing for a moment, such a right to exist, yet, who does not see that the exercise of that right, would be highly prejudicial to the general weal, and destructive of those very ends for which all government is established. The most valuable members of society might, in this case, be often taken from the world, while the worthless were emboldened by impunity, and spared only that they might still farther both vitiate themselves, and infest the public by the repetition of their crimes.

But against these evils, could a suitable provision be made? Could one, having a right to dispose of his own life, be found, and, by the surrender of that life, both able and willing to redeem the forfeited life of another, without either weakening the authority of the law, or injuring the interests of virtue; could one, I say, so

qualified, be found? doubtless, neither justice nor wisdom would refuse his generous proffer—would reject his voluntary and magnanimous sacrifice, because by admitting it, every good and valuable end would be attained, which the death of the criminal *himself* can be supposed to serve. Ample satisfaction to insulted justice would thus be made, due respect and obedience to lawful authority secured, and the highest degree of forbearance and mercy to the offender displayed.

Carrying these considerations then along with it, the unbiassed mind must acknowledge the death of Christ to be a reasonable sacrifice, and all the objections which are valid against one mere man, dying in the room of another, to be altogether irrelevant when applied to him. The son of God possessed a full and undisputed right over his own life, and was, therefore, at perfect liberty to lay it down, for the life and salvation of those whom he was not ashamed to call his brethren. Nor by exercising this right, did he permit any evil to befall the world by his *own loss*, or endanger the general harmony and happiness, by the *impunity of those* whose pardon he obtained.

For though he died, he triumphantly rose again, and the world, far from being a *loser* by his death, is in consequence of this very event, daily receiving the richest communications of his love, and the most delightful anticipations of that complete salvation, which as a Prince and Saviour, he is exalted finally to bestow. Neither doth the general good sustain the smallest injury, by that exemption from merited punishment which sinners thus receive. For all who by Jesus are delivered from guilt, are also by him inspired with the love, and prompted to the exercise of *goodness*. All who have their sins forgiven through his merits, are at the same time enlightened, purified, and reformed, by the effectual operations of his holy spirit. So that though once they may have been the slaves of Satan, they are now become the children of God: Though once they may have been a reproach to their nature, and even a nuisance to society; they are now made the lights of the world, and the excellent ones of the earth.

Thus fully then doth it appear, that *our* iniquities might, without any contradiction to reason, be *laid upon Christ*. And as our

iniquities were laid upon him, so his merits may be imputed to us. Indeed, in the former, the latter is necessarily implied; for if the merits of his sufferings could not extend to us, then these sufferings could not be said to be endured by him, as our substitute, for our sakes and in our stead. But though we say that *his merits* may be imputed to us, we mean not to say, that they can strictly, and properly, be made *our merits*, any more than we mean to say, that *our iniquities* could ever strictly and properly be made *his iniquities*; but as we have seen that the *punishment* of our iniquities, though not the *iniquities* themselves, might justly be *transferred to him*, in like manner, and for the same reason, we believe, that the *reward of his merits*, though not the *merits themselves*, may justly be *conferred upon us*. Clearly to apprehend the reasonableness of this, we need only exemplify it by a familiar instance. A person has done his country some signal service, for which the most lucrative employments, and the most splendid honours are offered him; he declines accepting them himself; but desires that they may be bestowed upon some other one, whom he sincerely loves, and whom

he knows to be qualified to receive them, and declares, that in this case, he shall regard them as bestowed upon himself. Now, if in such conduct we can see nothing absurd, or unreasonable, why not allow that our blessed Saviour might confer the rewards of his merits in the same way, as we can dispense our favours? Whatever privileges he acquired, by his voluntary humiliation, and unexampled sufferings for the children of men, such privileges were his own, and if his own, he might surely dispose of them as his own; and place them to our account; provided he did not by so doing, misplace them upon improper objects, and prostitute them to beings habitually and incorrigibly immoral.

Thus by the obedience of one, might many be made righteous. Their iniquities might be visited upon him, and his merits be rewarded upon them. And Jesus, therefore, though he knew no sin, might be made sin, or a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*.

* This Sermon ends abruptly. Had the Author lived to have sent it to the press, it would possibly have appeared in a more finished state.

SALVATION TO BE OBTAINED ONLY THROUGH CHRIST.

ACTS IV. 12

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

The most precious gift which man can receive, is the gift of salvation. With this, all other gifts, however precious and however splendid, are not worthy to be named. We

* There are some who, in order to elide the doctrine contained in these words, have represented them as applicable, not to the soul, but to the body. To justify this representation, they refer us to the connexion. Peter, say they, is here informing the Jews, by what power the man who had been lame from his birth, and "laid daily at the gate of the Temple called 'Beautiful,'" had been made whole. He declares, that he had been made whole by the power "of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,

may be rich and powerful : we may be, what the world calls, great and honourable ; but still, if we be “ far from God,” and without any well-grounded hope of salvation, we are of all creatures in the world the most miser-

“ whom the Jews crucified, and whom God raised from the dead—even by him (it is added) doth this man stand before you whole. This is the Stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved :”—that is, say they, *healed* ; for so, they allege, the original word *σωθισμός* ought to have been translated. But to this it may be answered, that *σωθισμός* is not the most appropriate word to express *healing* : Had the Apostle meant to convey this idea, it is likely he would have employed either the word *σωτηρία* or *σωτηρ*. But supposing that *σωθισμός* might here be translated *healing*, still it must mean *spiritual and eternal healing*, that is, *salvation* ; for the Apostle takes it for granted, that both he, and all those whom he addressed, stood in need of this *healing*. But can we suppose that he and they were all, at that moment, afflicted with bodily disease ? Or supposing that they were, yet had the Apostle any warrant to promise all of them *supernatural* recovery ? To what miserable shifts are men put, when they are determined to avoid the peculiar doctrines of Christianity ! Among those who interpret this passage so absurdly, I am sorry to find so judicious and eminent a commentator as Dr. Whiby.—The truth is, the Apostle, after calling the attention of his hearers to the power of Christ, to restore health and strength to the diseased and infirm body, naturally turns their thoughts to his power, to save the immortal soul. He declares Him to be the only Saviour: “ There is,” saith he, “ salvation in no other—none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

able. Whoever then pretends to the character of a rational being, is inexcusable, and acts in a manner altogether unworthy of his nature, if he neglect to make salvation the subject of his most solicitous inquiry. He ought solicitously to inquire, whether salvation may be obtained—what blessings it includes—and what is the way in which he may receive it. That salvation may be obtained, he cannot doubt, if he will only believe the word of God : “ Look unto me,” saith God, “ and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth*.” And the blessings which this salvation includes, are as great and abundant as the capacity of our nature will admit. They are eternal purity and peace—perfection and happiness. They are such as “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard ;”—nay, such as it hath not “ entered into the heart of man” to conceive. How important then, how necessary, to consider the way in which we can receive them ? We can receive them only through the obedience, sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ : “ There is salvation in no other.” Vain man may devise other means of salvation :

but unless man be wiser than God, is it possible that these means should ever be productive of the intended effect ? “ The wisdom” of man “ is foolishness with God.” God hath declared, that “ there is none “ other name under heaven, given among “ men, whereby we must be saved,” but the name of Christ.

Let us consider what is requisite to our being saved; and it will then be evident, that we can be saved only by Jesus Christ. Salvation includes our escape from eternal death, and admission to eternal life. That we may enjoy this salvation, then—our sins must be pardoned ;—ample reparation must be made to the divine law, which we have violated ;—and we ourselves must be made holy : made meet for the presence and enjoyment of God.

The Society whom I have now the honour to address, deeply impressed with the truth and importance of these things, have felt themselves constrained to propagate zealously, among their unenlightened brethren, CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE. May he who beholds every labour of love “ with a

"pleasant countenance," smile upon their
 "abundant labours, and crown them with in-
 "creasing success !

First, then, that we may be saved, our sins must be pardoned.

Need I enter into any elaborate reasoning to prove, that we are all sinners, and stand in need of pardon ? Alas ! this is a melancholy fact, but too fully verified. It admits not even of the possibility of a doubt.—I refer you to the whole history of man, ever since the fatal apostacy of Adam. It has been emphatically styled, *a lengthened record of follies and crimes.*—I refer you to the general practice of the world, which every day lies open to your view. What day did you ever see, without witnessing the commission of sin—without witnessing deluded men turning a deaf ear to the voice of God, foolishly preferring the interests of the perishing body to those of the immortal soul ; zealous in the pursuit of the things which are seen and temporal, but negligent, if not madly scornful, of those things which are unseen and eternal ?—I refer you to the unerring declarations of the Holy Scrip-

tures. Do they not declare, that “ all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God * ;” that “ there is none righteous, no not one † ;” that “ in us (that is, in our flesh) dwelleth no good thing ‡ ?”— I refer you even to yourselves. Have you never harboured an evil thought, or indulged an unhallowed passion? Does your conscience charge you with neither the commission of a single sin, nor the neglect of a single duty? In one word, are you holy as God is holy, and perfect as he is perfect; Alas! “ if we justify ourselves, our own mouths shall condemn us || . If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us § .” We must acknowledge, then, that we have all gone astray like lost sheep ¶ : We have sinned with our fathers: we have committed iniquity: we have done wickedly ** .” What then shall we answer unto thee, “ O thou Preserver of men !” Sin subjects us to punishment: “ The soul that sinneth, it shall die †† .” What therefore

* Rom. iii. 23.

† Rom. iii. 10.

‡ Rom. vii. 18.

|| Job ix. 20.

§ 1 John i. 8.

¶ Psal. cix. 17.

** Psal. cxi. 6.

†† Ezek. xviii. 4.

should be our heart's desire and prayer to God? What, but that we may be saved? But if ever we be saved, we must be saved wholly by grace; and consequently, must receive the blessing of pardon. Without pardon, we are still "in our sins," and necessarily subject to punishment. Now, pardon secures deliverance from punishment—from all the direful consequences of sin: pardon, therefore, is implied in the very nature of salvation.

But, *secondly*, that we may be saved, not only must our sins be pardoned—ample reparation, also, must be made to the divine law, which we have violated.

Though grace, the most abundant, were shown to any being or class of beings, yet were it shown at the expence of justice, wisdom could not applaud, nor even cease to condemn it: for, in this case, it would be undeserving of the name of grace: it would not only be inconsistent with the divine nature, but ultimately tend to ruin the order and felicity of the universe; because the order and felicity of the universe must always depend upon the moral rectitude that

obtains in it. But moral rectitude consists in obedience to "the law of the Lord :" and "the law of the Lord," like the Lord himself, "is perfect," and admits of nothing short of *perfect* obedience. Did it admit of *imperfect* obedience, it would admit of the transgression of itself. But dare we thus to fasten contradiction on the law of God ? Dare we to consider it as encouraging or tolerating the least degree of sin ? No :— It denounces "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," against every, even the slightest transgression. Hear its awful language ! " Whosoever shall keep " the whole law, and yet offend in one " point, is guilty of all *." " Cursed is every " one that continueth not in all things " which are written in the book of the law " to do them *." Can there be a law without sanctions—without promising a reward to the obedient, and threatening punishment to the disobedient ? And what are these sanctions, unless they be carried into execution ? Whatever reason there be for God to threaten punishment, the same reason holds for his inflicting it, when the

infliction is merited. If it was reasonable to threaten, would it not be a departure from reason, if the threatening were not accomplished? God threatens nothing but what righteousness requires. And shall not "the righteous Lord" ever love, and adhere to righteousness? Is he "a man, " that he should lie, or the son of man, that "he should repent?" hath he said, and shall "he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall "he not make it good?" Whatever he hath said, wisdom and truth, and goodness itself, require him to perform. Before, then, we can be saved, things which seem to be heterogeneous, must combine: things which seem to be irreconcilable, must fully harmonize:—Sin must be punished, and yet the sinner be redeemed: the law must be magnified and made honourable, and yet pardon be extended to the guilty: "mercy "and truth must meet together; righte- "ousness and peace kiss each other;" God must be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly.

THIRDLY, That we may be saved, not only must our sins be pardoned, and ample reparation made to the divine law, which

we have violated ; we ourselves, too, must be made holy—made meet for the presence and enjoyment of God.

Salvation is deliverance from misery, and restoration to happiness. But we cannot be happy, that is, we cannot be *saved*, unless, we be holy. Holiness constitutes our chief resemblance to God; and unless we resemble him, we cannot have the happiness of those “ whom he chooseth, and causeth to approach unto him, that they may dwell in his courts, and be for ever praising him.” To be happy, there must be a correspondence between the faculty that enjoys, and the object enjoyed. It is natural for a beautiful object to please the eye ; but it must be an eye fitted to receive a pleasing impression from such an object. It is natural for harmonious sounds to please the ear ; but it must be an ear fitted to distinguish and relish the charms of music. In like manner, it is natural for all men to desire happiness ; but that true happiness may be enjoyed, there must be a correspondence between the mind, and the object from which its happiness is derived. Now, that object is God, and holiness forms the re-

quisite correspondence. Happiness is of too refined a nature to arise merely out of local circumstances. In the being who is to enjoy it, there must be qualities and dispositions fitting him to receive it. An unholv man would be miserable in heaven itself. There is nothing there, that could gratify the desires of his corrupted mind. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. "Blessed" only "are the pure in heart." Who, but the "spiritually minded," can enter into life? Verily, verily, I say unto "you," (these are the words of Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith)—"verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a "man be born again, he cannot see the "kingdom of God."

Thus, then, it appears necessary to our being *saved*—that our sins be pardoned;—that ample reparation be made to the divine law, which we have violated;—and that we ourselves be made holy: made meet for the presence and enjoyment of God. But how can all this be effected? Can it be effected by *ourselves*, or by *any*, even the *most exalted creature in the universe?*

1. It can never be effected by *ourselves*. We are all confessedly sinners: and considered as such, surely we can have no claim to the divine favour. If we could, as sinners, have such a claim, then farewell to the sanctions of the divine law, to the doctrine of divine providence; and to all the order and purity of the divine government. Now, if considered merely as sinners, we can have no hope—how shall we be saved?—There are two expedients which man has devised—*Sacrifice* and *Repentance*.

But of what avail are the most costly sacrifice which man can offer? “Where—“ with shall we come before the Lord, and “ bow ourselves before the high God? Shall “ we come before him with burnt-offerings, “ with calves of a year old? Will the Lord “ be pleased with thousands of rams, or with “ ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall we “ give our first-born for our transgression, “ the fruit of our body for the sin of our “ soul *?” Is it reconcilable with reason or common sense, to suppose that any, or all of these, can ever expiate moral guilt, ap-

please the wrath of an offended God, or procure a title to his forfeited favour? The truth is, sacrifices, considered in themselves—considered as prescribed only by human reason (if they can be so considered), and without any regard to divine institution, serve only as an expression of consciousness that punishment is deserved. But can the mere consciousness of deserving punishment, necessarily imply a well-grounded hope of escaping it? A more absurd imagination can scarcely enter the human heart.

Shall we then from sacrifice have recourse to *repentance*? God, it hath been said, is merciful; and with him, the tears of repentance, issuing in a life of reformation and obedience, will be accepted as a sufficient compensation for our sins *.

It is certainly our duty to repent: without repentance, we cannot be saved; but to suppose that we shall be saved merely on

* That Repentance is of itself efficacious to propitiate God, is asserted by all Infidels; and even by some, who have assumed to themselves the name of *Rational Christians*.

account of our repentance, is an idea as false as it is dangerous. God, indeed, is merciful; but he is also wise, and holy, and just: wise, and holy, and just, likewise, are all his commandments. We are therefore indispensably bound to obey them: and for the same reason that we are bound to obey them at one, we are bound to obey them at every period of our lives. How then can obedience during one period, compensate for disobedience during another? The obedience of each period, however strict, is nothing more than requisite for that individual period: How then shall present or future obedience be pleaded as an atonement for past transgressions? As well might the debtor plead the exactness of his present or future payments, as an argument for his creditor absolving him from past arrears. If on no other subject men would employ such foolish reasoning, why then employ it on the subject of religion?

Besides, the idea of repentance being a sufficient atonement for sin, is as contrary to fact as it is to reason. Look around you in the world, and you will see men who have been thoughtless, extravagant, and

dissipated, suffering the penal consequences of their thoughtlessness, extravagance, and dissipation, long after they have confessedly become serious, sober, and reformed. The truth of this is so evident, as to require but little illustration.—How often do we see one rash step followed by a train of evils, from which no future consideration can ever recover the unhappy victim! How often do we see the penitent spendthrift, notwithstanding his acknowledged change of mind, involved, through life, in penury and ruin ! How often do we see the reclaimed debauchee, notwithstanding his return from sin and folly, still suffering the effects of his guilt—still afflicted with disease and pain, and even entailing the sad inheritance upon his unfortunate offspring ! If then repentance does not avert the consequences of misconduct here, what reason have we to think that it will have sufficient efficacy *of itself* to avert the direful consequences of sin hereafter? Have we not every reason to conclude, that God maintains an inviolable harmony between his natural and his moral government ?

But still it may be urged, that as sin is the only ground of the divine displeasure,

therefore relinquishing sin, and returning to holiness, or, which is the same thing, *repentance*, must be sufficient of itself to obtain the divine favour.

I grant, that sin is the only ground of the divine displeasure ; but I deny the conclusion, that relinquishing sin, and returning to holiness, or, which is the same thing, *repentance**, must therefore be sufficient of itself to obtain the divine favour. When a man returns to his duty, he may *so far* be the object of approbation. But supposing him to be approved of *for the present* ; upon the very same principle, he must still remain an object of blame, and, consequently, obnoxious to punishment for what is *past*. Surely, what is criminal in the act, will not cease to be so after it is committed. The mere circumstance of *time*—the mere circumstance of its being *past*, does not change the nature of sin : It is still “*the abominable thing that God hateth.*” If, from the mere circumstance of its being *past*, sin

* *Repentance* means a holy change of mind, evidencing itself by a corresponding change of conduct. Now, this change, let the advocates for human merit remember, cannot be accomplished by ourselves. Remorse, like faith, “is the gift of God.”

ceased to be punishable, then there could be no punishment at all, for every punishment has necessarily a *retrospect*: it is the infliction of an evil, on account of an evil *done*. And if there could be no punishment, then no pardon would be requisite. Pardon is absolution from punishment; but when no punishment can be inflicted, the very possibility of pardon becomes necessarily excluded.

But admitting that repentance were sufficient of itself to obtain the divine favour, yet what repentance is meant? Surely, a repentance absolutely perfect; for if it be debased with frailty and sin, how can it obtain the divine favour, since every, even the least degree of sin is confessedly a cause of the divine displeasure? But is an absolutely perfect repentance the repentance of *imperfect* beings? Is it the repentance of sinful man? Alas! his very repentance needs "to be repented of."

Still, however, we are told, that God is gracious: that he remembers our frame; remembers that we are so formed, as to be not only liable, but likely to sin: that we

are born with strong propensities to vice, and surrounded with innumerable temptations. All, therefore (it is added,) that he can require of us, is only to do what we can, and when we have done this, then have we every reason to believe that he will accept and save us, without any other atonement or propitiatory sacrifice.

In answer to this, we might well ask, Why then does the law require perfect obedience? Why does God exact what neither we can perform, nor he himself intends us to perform? But passing over this, I would only observe, that even, by this proposed rule of judgment, none of us would be able to stand; for ignorant and weak as we all are by nature, yet none of us have done our duty even to the utmost of our power. Who can lay his hand upon his heart and say, that he has been as diligent as he could; as frequent and fervent in prayer as he could; as watchful against sin as he could; as vigorous in the performance of any one work of righteousness as he could? Is he willing to stand forth on the last day of accounts, and, on this ground, to plead for acceptance? Out of his own mouth would

he be condemned. With shame and confusion of face would he not rather have reason to pray, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord! for in thy sight shall no man living be justified *?"

—Besides, salvation implies, not only deliverance from punishment, but admittance to the perfect and eternal enjoyment of heaven. What extravagance! what presumption then, to suppose, that, by our own doings, we can ever obtain this vast and divine inheritance! We merit nothing but "the wages of sin," which is "death."

2. If then our salvation cannot be effected by *ourselves*, can it be effected for us, by *any*, even the most exalted creature in the universe? No:—The salvation of but one soul, and far more that of a whole world, is a work infinitely too arduous for any creature to attempt to accomplish. No creature—not even the highest angel around the throne, can *merit* for himself; far less can he ever *merit* for others. The greater the excellencies with which such a being is ennobled, the more is he indebted to Him from whom

they are derived ; for the highest angel is in this respect, like the meanest of the children of men : he can plead the possession of nothing which he has not received. Nay, his services, however great, must, through all eternity, be disproportioned to the amazing blessings which he freely enjoys. How absurd, then, to think that any such being, who can do nothing to merit even for himself, should be capable of meriting forgiveness, and everlasting happiness, for a whole world of perishing sinners ! He, who shall be our Saviour, must be Independent and Divine. He must have no obligation of his own to fulfil, that he may be capable of meriting for others. In one view, indeed, he must be a partaker of our nature, that he may obey and suffer in our stead ; but, in another view, he must be " God blessed for ever," that his obedience may be of value sufficient to be a propitiation for the sins of the world. In a word, he must be capable of " laying down " his life," and have, what no creature can have, power of himself to lay it down, and, " power to take it up again ;" and thus be " able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God through him." Now,

such is the Saviour who is revealed in the gospel! "He is God as well as man. As man, he obeyed and suffered as our Substitute; and being God as well as man, his obedience became of value sufficient to atone for the sins of men. "We are redeemed, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold ; but with the precious blood of Christ." He, "by his eternal Spirit, offered himself up without spot to God †." God, say the Scriptures, "hath purchased the church with his own blood ‡." The Godhead, indeed, was incapable of suffering; yet the Person, who was God as well as man, might suffer, just as though the soul is imperishable, yet man, who is compounded of body and soul, is nevertheless mortal. "This," then, "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ||"—to seek and "to save that which was lost §." Through him we may now come boldly to the throne of grace, and obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need ¶." We may obtain the

* 1 Peter i. 18, 19.
† 1 Tim. ii. 15.

‡ Heb. ix. 14.
§ Math. xxviii. 11.

† Acts xx. 29.
¶ Heb. iv. 16.

pardon of sin, and that, too, in a perfect consistency with the order and majesty of the divine government; because, by our glorious Substitute, the threatened punishment hath been endured, and "all righteousness fulfilled.—Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*. He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification†. For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself‡." Through the sufferings and death of Christ, we may also obtain the regenerating influence of the holy Spirit—salvation, not only from the guilt, but from the love and practice of sin—establishment "in every good word and work," and a meetness for the inheritance "of the saints in light.—Yes: "We are not only justified; we are also washed—we are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Where," then, "is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this

* Gal. iii. 13.

† Rom. iv. 25.

‡ Col. i. 19, 20.

"world?" Let him come forth with his strong reasons against the gospel, and point out, if he can, another foundation for our hope. "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Christ is "the wisdom of God." Ah! "to whom can we go but to Him? he hath the words of eternal life. There is salvation in no other: there is none other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved."—But we cannot be saved even by Him, unless we believe in Him. "By grace are we saved;"—but it is "through faith*." Without faith, it is impossible to please God †. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned ‡." O may we all lay this seriously to heart! May we be convinced of sin, gladly listen to the calls of mercy, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Then shall we be saved: we cannot perish: we are heirs of everlasting life.

Thus, my friends, have I endeavoured to illustrate and confirm the declaration of my

* Ephes. ii. 9

† Heb. xi. 6.

‡ Mark xvi. 16

text. I have shown you, what is requisite to our being saved :—Our sins must be pardoned :—ample reparation must be made to the divine law, which we have violated :—and we ourselves made holy ; make meet for the presence and enjoyment of God. I have shown you, that nothing of this can be effected by ourselves, nor by any, even the most exalted creature in the universe : That it can be effected only by the Son of God : That “there is salvation in no other: “none other name under heaven, given “among men, whereby we must be saved.”

What shall become of the Heathen world, who have not, like us, been favoured with the knowledge of Christ, I would not be so presumptuous as to determine. This however I know, that they are in the hands of a gracious God, who is acquainted with their state, and who will not exact from them the improvement of means which he hath never bestowed. He is not “a hard” master, “reaping where he hath not sown, “and gathering where he hath not strawed.” What he requires, is never unjustly proportioned to what he hath given. Those, of the Heathen, then, who are to perish,

will not perish from their disobedience to the gospel, of which they have been involuntarily ignorant ; but from their wilful and habitual disobedience to that eternal and universal law which is “written in their “hearts.” The Heathen, like all other men, shall be judged according to the light, and opportunities of improvement, with which they have been favoured ; and none of them shall ever perish, but those who are confessedly “without excuse”—who are condemned by their own conscience; as well as by Him “who is greater than their con-“science, and knoweth all things.” But though none of them shall be condemned, for not knowing and believing the gospel, which they never heard ; yet whoever, among them, is saved, must be saved by the grace which the gospel reveals—and by the “one Mediator,” too, “between God and “man, the man Christ Jesus.” And this is not mere positive appointment : it is certain and unalterable as eternal truth. God himself hath declared, that “there is sal-“vation in no other : none other name “under heaven, given among men,” but the name of Christ, “whereby we must be “saved.” But how men can be made par-

takers of this salvation, which was never revealed to them, I pretend not to explain : " Secret things belong to the Lord." Whatever our little minds are unable to comprehend, shall we dare to pronounce impossible : We should be ashamed of such guilt and folly. What are we—creatures of dust, worms but of yesterday—that we should limit the " holy One of Israel ?" What ! merely because we are ignorant how the Heathen can be saved, shall we therefore adjudge them all to irretrievable ruin ? Were we warranted to do so, then we might safely conclude, irretrievable ruin to be the frightful destiny of many good men, also, who lived in the Old World, and, in subsequent times, under the Jewish dispensation. For who will undertake to prove, that these men, highly favoured as they were, possessed a clear, distinct, and explicit knowledge of Christ, as the propitiation for the sins of the world ? We know, that even the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord, previous to the day of Pentecost, were strangers to this knowledge. Accordingly, Peter, instead of knowing and believing that his Master was to die, deprecates the event as unbecoming and unnecessary : Be it far from

"thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee *." The Apostles and Disciples of Christ, during his personal ministry, seem to have had only a vague and general view of him as some great deliverer :—of the particular nature of the deliverance which he was to bring, and of the manner in which it was to be accomplished, they seem to have been grossly ignorant. Shall we suppose, then, that what even they did not understand, was better, or so well understood, by those who lived in still more unfavourable circumstances—by the good men who lived in the Old World, and, in subsequent times, under the Jewish dispensation †. But are all

* Math. xvi. 22.

† Some, perhaps, may here object, *Did not Job believe in Jesus Christ as his Redeemer, who was to stand on the latter day upon the earth?* And did not Isaiah clearly predict his birth, the manner of his life, the design of his death, and the triumph of his kingdom?

I answer . Job, and a few such eminent characters, might, in some bright hours, have been elevated above the level of the dispensation under which they lived ; but it will be difficult indeed to prove, that they, even in their brightest hours, had a clear, distinct, and explicit knowledge of Christ, in all his different offices ; particularly, in that of our great High Priest, who was to offer himself up to God as our atoning sacrifice. Isaiah himself cannot well be pleaded as an exception. Perhaps, his own ideas were very indistinct, though the predictions

the Patriarchs, and ancient Worthies, doomed to suffer everlasting destruction?—Remember too, that the state of all infants and irrationals is, in this instance, precisely similar to that of the Heathen. Infants and irrationals neither have, nor can have a

which he uttered were minutely accurate. We know, that the Prophets were often little more than mere vehicles of the truths which they communicated.—They evidently appear to have considered Christ, only in the general view of some great and glorious deliverer. Had their views been more luminous and determinate, then these views would have been more extensively communicated; a clear, distinct, and explicit knowledge of Christ would have been much more generally prevalent. Now, if this knowledge had been prevalent, how is it possible to account for the ignorance of the very Apostles and Disciples of our Lord, previous to the day of Pentecost?

The above train of reasoning is by no means intended to prove, that *all* the Heathen will be saved (this I dare not maintain;) but only to expose the gross absurdity, and impious presumption of those who consign them *all* to everlasting destruction. Such a savage theology shocks the best feelings of the heart, and unnecessarily excites a prejudice against the glorious gospel. It so shocked the minds of some of the Christian Fathers, that they revolted to the opposite extreme. St. Clement of Alexandria affirmed, that Philosophy was that to the Greeks which the law was to the Jews—a schoolmaster to bring men *unto Christ*. (Strom. lib. i. p. 282. edit. Par.)—St. Chrysostom said, that they who, despising idolatry, adored the Creator before the advent of the Messiah, were saved without faith, (Hom. xxvi. St. Matth.)—Even St. Augustine, that strenuous advocate for orthodoxy, declared it as his opinion, that the Erythrean Sybil was in heaven. (Vide Civit. Dei, lib. xviii.

clear, distinct, and explicit knowledge of Christ. But yet are they all, when they die, doomed to suffer everlasting destruction?—The very thought is horrible!—Let us not, by indulging it, inadvertently strengthen the hands of the Infidel. Let us abjure a doctrine which impiously reflects on the character of the Supreme. Never let our religious speculations be disgraced by the horrid spirit of cruelty and presumption. Never let us so speak and reason, as if the unavoidable and eternal misery of unnumbered millions of our fellow-creatures in hell, were necessary to our full and eternal enjoyment of heaven. Instead of consigning, in cold blood, more than two-thirds of all who ever lived to the vengeance of eternal fire, let us rather be zealous to

cap. 23.)—And Zwinglius, one of the Reformers, in a letter to Francis I. King of France, assigns Theseus, Hercules, Numa, Aristides, Cato, and the ancestors of the King, a place with the Patriarchs, the Virgin Mary, and the Apostles. (See his Epistle, at the beginning of his Exposition of the Christian Faith.)—How many are there, who ignorantly quote these Christian Fathers as venerable authorities, who would not only blame, but anathematize any contemporary, who should venture to advance some of the opinions which even these Christian Fathers advanced? Had such persons a little more knowledge and consistency, it would be better for them.

" work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." Palliating circumstances evidently exist in the case of the Heathen, and which, with reason, may be pleaded by them, but which cannot be pleaded by us, if we continue in ignorance and sin. Our lot is cast in a land of light : to us the gospel is clearly revealed ; and our attention to it, as the only means of our salvation, is daily and earnestly solicited. If then we neglect it, our neglect is inexcusable : to us " there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." Almighty goodness itself cannot consistently save us : we necessitate our own destruction. This God hath declared, and it is no arbitrary declaration ; the truth of it necessarily arises out of the immutable rectitude of his being. " To-day," then, " while it is called To-day, let us hear his voice, and harden not our hearts." Jesus is " the way, and the truth, and the life." There is salvation in no other : none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." Such being the case, what remains but that I shortly direct you to the proper improvement of this interesting subject ?

My friends, we may here see the folly and danger of infidelity;—the inestimable value of the gospel;—the necessity of seeking for ourselves the salvation which it reveals;—and the obligations under which we lie, to propagate the knowledge of it among our fellow-creatures.

We may here see THE FOLLY AND DANGER OF INFIDELITY.—Infidelity is a mad resistance of the truth, though accompanied with the strongest evidence. It is rejecting the counsel of God against ourselves. It is contemning and blaspheming the name of Christ, though “there is salvation in no other: none other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved.”—The folly of Infidels is equalled only by their danger. They are “fighting against God,” and they cannot prosper. Without a particular interposition of that very grace which they condemn, how can they escape the damnation of hell? Happy for such men, had their lot been cast in some dark corner of the world, where the Sun of righteousness hath never risen! They might then have pleaded as an extenuating circumstance, their unavoidable

ignorance of the divine will ; but what can they now plead, while they live, and act, and reason like Heathens, in the meridian light of the gospel ? Their glorious privileges will aggravate their doom. Ah ! "this will be their condemnation, that light is come into the world, and they have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

We see here THE VALUE OF THE GOSPEL. We are all naturally desirous of happiness; and it is the gospel only that can inform us how true happiness can be found. There is no true happiness to the soul, burdened with a sense of guilt ; ignorant how it may be expiated ; and having, therefore, nothing but "a fearful looking for of judgment." Now, this is precisely the case of every one of us by nature. Chargeable with innumerable sins, we are all by nature the children of wrath. And no sooner are we made sensible of our situation, than we exclaim with anxiety and alarm, "What shall we do to be saved !" Here the gospel comes in seasonably to our aid. It proclaims the most gladsome tidings that ever reached our listening ears. It proclaims to us the

name of Jesus : it tells us of "redemption
"through his blood, even the forgiveness
"of sins, according to the riches of his
"grace." It reveals to us a provision for
our happiness every way worthy of infinite
goodness; a happiness that not only sup-
plies our wants, and satisfies our desires,
but surpasses our very wishes—transports
us with wonder, and fills us with everlast-
ing praise. Inestimable system ! I am not
surprised that it is styled, "The glorious
"gospel of the blessed God." Let us dili-
gently search it : let us love and admire it,
and make it the subject of joyful meditation
both day and night.

And while we see, from this subject, the
inestimable value of the gospel, we may see
also THE NECESSITY OF SEEKING FOR OUR-
SELVES THE SALVATION WHICH IT REVEALS.
It is a precious salvation ; salvation from
sin, restoration to the divine favour, and an
irrevocable title to everlasting glory. To
accomplish this salvation, God "spared not
"his own Son," but "delivered him up"
to death "for us all." Yet how seldom
does this wondrous grace occupy our serious
attention ! We give it a transient thought,

or a casual hearing; and then return "to
"our farms and our merchandise"—to our
different pursuits and diversions, as if these
were matters of more momentous concern.
But is this the conduct of an ingenuous,
reasonable mind? Do we thus requite the
Lord? Ah! "how shall we escape, if we
"neglect so great salvation? He that des-
"pised Moses' law, died without mercy."
It was dangerous, it was destructive to re-
fuse him that spoke upon earth: take heed,
then, how you trifle with him "that speak-
"eth from heaven! There is salvation in
"no other: there is none other name under
"heaven, given among men, whereby we
"must be saved." Give, then, I conjure
you, my beloved brethren, no sleep to your
eyes, and no slumber to your eyelids, till
you have come to him, and found rest to
your souls; till you esteem him, and cleave
to him, as your only portion; till you have
made your calling and election sure, and
have good hope, through grace, of a blessed
immortality. And having this hope in you,
purify yourselves even as God is pure.
Abstain from even *the appearance* of evil.
Endeavour to live, in all things, as the
disciples of Jesus; to keep his holy precepts,

and imitate his glorious example. Thus justify your profession : thus fight the good fight of faith, and adorn the doctrines of the gospel : Thus, " let your light shine " before men, that they may see your good " works, and glorify your Father which is " in heaven." And " fear not, nor be dis- " mayed," for " thus saith the Lord, My " grace is sufficient for you : for my strength " is made perfect in weakness. Ask, and it " shall be given you : seek, and ye shall " find : knock, and it shall be opened unto " you." The eyes of the Lord will be upon you : his ear will listen, delighted, to your cry : he will give his angels charge con- cerning you : he will guide you by his counsel, and afterward receive you to glory. All things shall be yours ; for you shall be " Christ's, and Christ is God's."

But while we see here the folly and dan-
ger of infidelity ; the inestimable value of
the gospel ; and the necessity of seeking
for ourselves the salvation which the gospel
reveals ; we may see, too, OUR OBLIGATIONS
ZEALOUSLY TO PROPAGATE THE KNOWLEDGE
OF IT AMONG OUR FELLOW-CREATURES. If
we saw any of our fellow-creatures *wretched*,

and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, would not the common feelings of humanity impel us instantly to administer relief? But is not the immortal soul infinitely preferable to the mortal body? How eager then should we be to pour divine instruction into those who are perishing for lack of knowledge! They are, in the worst sense, wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. They are "without hope, and without God in the world." They are ignorant of Him through "whom only they must be saved." Is there a man who can behold such persons without concern? Tell me not of his otherwise blameless character, and of his fair profession. He is the worse for his profession. He cannot be a Christian. "How dwelleth the love of God in that man?" If we be Christians, as God hath loved us, so shall we love, and be all zeal to do good, as we have opportunity to our perishing brethren. As we have received mercy ourselves, we shall be constrained to show mercy to others. We shall become workers together with God himself, and do every thing we can to diffuse the light of truth, and enlarge the empire of benevolence. And not satisfied with increasing

the enjoyments, and diminishing the miseries of the present world, we shall extend our regards to the immortal soul, and strive daily to exalt our brethren to the perception—the pursuit—the possession of eternal perfection and happiness.—My intelligent and respected hearers, you have already anticipated the character which I might here give of the Venerable Society for propagating Christian Knowledge*. But they require no applause of mine. Their works are the works of God ; and the report of them hath “ gone through all the “ earth, and to the ends of the world.” Need I detail to you their history, or tell you of their success ? Need I inform you, that near 16,000 are now educating at their schools ; and that above 300,000 have been educated by them since the commencement of their labours, of whom many have risen to useful and even eminent stations in life, and many, by the divine blessing on the Society’s efforts, are now rejoicing in heaven before God and the Lamb ? But I dwell not upon the past : I call your attention to

* This sermon was preached before the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge.

the present. This Christian Society "wearies not in well-doing." They are still, as in former times, both erecting schools, and watering the churches. A most interesting work now engages their attention. Listening to the call of thousands, who have not the Scriptures in their native tongue, the Society is employed, at this moment, in publishing, at a vast expence, the Word of life, in the Gaelic language. Have you a principle of benevolence? Have you a spirit of patriotism—any love for the souls of men—any "bowels of mercies?" Be persuaded to come forward, and give this Society your aid. Let not your prayers only, but your alms—your charitable contributions, come up in grateful memorial before God. Come and help the Society, to point out to your fellow creatures—your countrymen—your brethren, the way of life; to teach them "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord"—of Him by whom only they "must be saved."

THE
NATURE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 COR. x. 16, 17, 18.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?—the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?—For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh, are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

In this chapter the Apostle exhorts the Corinthians to stedfast perseverance in the profession of their faith, and consequently to a strict abstinence from every thing inconsistent with that profession. And with this view, he reprehends them for a practice,

which was then, it seems, prevalent, namely, their entering into the unhallowed temples of the heathen, and there partaking of the feasts offered to false gods. Such conduct he clearly demonstrates to be totally incompatible with the pure and undefiled religion of Christ—nay, to be a virtual renunciation of their fellowship with the true God, and a professed act of *communion* with these idols. And that their partaking of idol feasts, really implied a *communion* of this kind, he makes evident from the nature of that *communion* implied in the participation of the Lord's Supper, that great feast solemnized by Christians; and also from that communion which was always understood to be implied in the participation of those sacrifices offered by the Jews.—“I speak to you,” says Paul, “as to wise men—judge ye what I say.—The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?—the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh, are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?”—But if, under the law, those who ate of

the sacrifices were partakers of the altar ; and if now, under the Gospel, those who sit down at the table of the Lord profess to hold communion with their Saviour, then the Apostle's conclusion is manifestly just —that the Corinthians, by partaking of idol feasts, did practically and openly profess themselves to be in real communion with their idols, in honour of whom those feasts were instituted.—Such is the place which the verses now under consideration hold in the Apostle's reasoning. They are introduced to illustrate and confirm the charge which he here brings forward against some of the Christians at Corinth. A careful examination of them, will perhaps aid us in forming distinct and accurate ideas of the nature and design of the Lord's Supper.

Let us in the *first* place, then, endeavour to ascertain the precise meaning of this portion of Scripture, and,

In the *next* place, consider what support it gives to the various opinions held concerning the Lord's Supper.

We are *first*, then, to ascertain the precise meaning of this portion of Scripture.

The cup in the sacrament is here styled "the cup of blessing," in allusion to a custom observed by the Jews in the celebration of the Passover, and their other public festivals. When the guests were sat down, it was usual for the master of the feast to take bread and "bless" it, that is, to give thanks to God for it, and beg his blessing to accompany it, and then break it and distribute it among all who were present. After supper, he also took a cup of wine, and after having blessed it and drunk of it himself, he handed it to the guests to drink of it likewise. Hence came into use this phrase—*the breaking of bread*—and hence, too, the particular phrase of which we are now speaking—"the cup of blessing."—The cup in the Lord's Supper receives with propriety the same denomination, for in taking it, we give thanks and bless the Lord for his redeeming love to the children of men. By solemn prayer we hallow, we consecrate it, and beg of God to bless it for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.—This cup of blessing which we bless, and the bread which we break, are said by the Apostle to be the communion of the body and blood of Christ. The original word *, here translated *Communion*,

would have been better translated, *Participation*; because the English word Communion, generally involves fellowship one with another; whereas the original expresses only each particular Christian believer's fellowship with Christ. It does not signify a *joint partaking*, or the partaking of several together, but simply each individual's partaking. And when several persons or things are spoken of as partaking of any thing, this word does not of itself express *collectively* the *joint participation* of all; but simply the distinct participation of each; that is, it expresses the general idea of participation alone: and here the soul's participation of the comforts and joys of salvation. In addition to this remark on the word translated *communion*, or as it ought to be, *participation*, it may be proper also to observe, that though the Apostle inserts it only in the latter part of the questions which he here puts to the Corinthians, yet the meaning evidently implies that it should be understood in the former part of them also. The cup in the Lord's Supper is called the communion or partaking of the blood of Christ. But it must be *the partaking* of the cup, that is, *the partaking* of the blood of Christ.

The bread is styled the partaking of the body of Christ ; but it must be the *partaking of the bread*, that is, the partaking of the body of Christ. The *Cup* and the *Bread*, then, must mean the *partaking of the Cup and the Bread*, in order to answer to the phrase—*partaking of the body and blood of Christ*, which immediately follows.

In verse 17th it is added—“ for we being “ many are one bread and one body, for we “ are all partakers of that one bread.” Now, though some sort of meaning may be gathered from these words ; yet they seem to be an obscure and mistaken interpretation of the original. In their present form, they do not so properly connect either with the verse that precedes or with that which follows them. Besides, the metaphor by which communicants are styled “ one bread,” is rather a strange and unnatural one. Accordingly, St. Paul has never before introduced it in the course of his reasonings ; but has always employed that plain, significant figure, by which Christians are called one body. But the meaning will be plain and unembarrassed, if the verse be translated thus, as it certainly ought to be.—“ Since

"the bread is one, we who are many, or we all, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread".—The object of our participation being one, we all become knit together as the constituent members of one frame.

"Behold Israel, (adds St. Paul,) after the flesh,"—that is, consider the Jews under their carnal dispensation,—“are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?”—Do they not by feasting upon the remainder of the peace offerings presented upon it, publicly profess their adherence to it?—publicly avow that they revere that altar as holy, and therefore that they worship and hold communion with that God to whom it is dedicated, and participate of its benefits. Doubtless such persons are justly viewed, as approving and cordially embracing the whole Jewish religion!—That this is the true import of the verse, will appear still more evident, if we consider what Josephus and other writers inform us—namely, that it was held lawful for persons who were not wholly converts to the Jewish religion, to offer sacrifices in the Temple of Jerusalem. But though they were not worshippers of other gods: yet that to such

it was not granted to eat of the sacrifices which they themselves had presented. This was granted to none save those who were fully the disciples of Moses, and the unreserved worshippers of the God of the Jews. Whoever therefore partook of the victims offered on the altar, thus testified that he worshipped at no other altar, and consequently held communion with no other God than the God of Israel, to whom the altar was raised. And this interpretation of the verse admirably corresponds with the subsequent verses, in which the Apostle shows, that partaking of idol feasts in the heathen temples was an overt act of idolatry—a declared fellowship with false gods: and therefore peculiarly inconsistent and unlawful in all those who embraced the Christian faith.

The sum, then, of the Apostle's reasoning is this,—that Christian proselytes should not partake of idol feasts; for such partaking was a professed act of fellowship with those idols. This he illustrates from the Lord's Supper, where the partaking of the sacred elements is a public profession of fellowship with the Lord Jesus—and the whole body of believers of which the Lord

Jesus is the Head—the real participation of all those spiritual blessings, of which the sacred elements are the appointed signs and seals ;—just as those who, under the law, partook of the sacrifices, were accounted partakers of the altar—accounted as having their fellowship with that God in whose altar the sacrifices were offered.—O that we may all have clear views of the holy Ordinance of which the Apostle speaks ! May all, not only know its nature, but feel its blessed effects—feed by faith on Him who is the living bread—the life and food of our souls—and go on our way strengthened, satisfied, rejoiced !

Having thus, my friends, endeavoured to ascertain the obvious and natural meaning of the passage before us ; let us now, in the next place, consider what countenance, what support it gives to the various opinions held concerning the Lord's Supper, to which it alludes.

We here learn, that communicants at the table of the Lord, partake of the body and blood of Christ, but with regard to the nature of this participation, the opinions of men have been widely different in the

Christian world. Some have been so absurd, as to maintain, that it means the partaking of the *real body and blood* of Christ. Others, that it rather means the participation of all those effects, or benefits, which the breaking of this body, and the shedding of this blood, procured : or, which is the same, that it is of the nature of a feast upon a sacrifice :—Others, again, viewing this rite, in a still simpler point of view than either of these, consider the phrase, *communion of Christ's body and blood*, as meaning only the communion of the *memorials* of his body and blood. What we judge the true doctrine, and the doctrine of our Church's confession of faith on this head, we shall briefly explain and illustrate, after examining those which we have already stated.

The first of the opinions now mentioned, is that of the Church of Rome. It is too well known to need any fuller statement, and too monstrous, and too shocking to reason and common sense, to be honoured, at this time of intellectual day, with a serious and formal refutation. For who would not be ashamed gravely to demonstrate, that at the institution of the holy supper,

Jesus Christ did not hold his own body in his hand, and give it to be eaten by his disciples? Who would not disdain formally to prove, that in every celebration of this sacred ordinance, the whole body of Christ is not in every particle of the bread, and his whole blood in every particle of the wine, which the communicants receive. For to believe the contrary, is an error which our very external senses may correct. It is blasphemy, which one would think no man in the use of his sober senses, could inculcate or maintain. It is nonsense, which, were we not assured of the fact, we should not believe could be swallowed even by the weakest of the multitude. But without following out any farther, the absurdities of this doctrine, which no power can reconcile, we shall only here, as the most proper place for the purpose, observe, that in the celebration of this institution, the sacred elements undergo no miraculous transmutation, nor have any mystical powers or virtues whatever infused into them. They remain in themselves, just the same bread and wine after consecration as they were before. The only change that takes place, is, not in the elements, but in the mind of

the receiver. Instead of viewing them as common bread and wine, he regards them as the sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ. And this is all that we mean by that relative holiness, which any thing is said to receive by consecration. Holiness is a moral attribute, and can only reside in a moral being. When, therefore, we say that any thing inanimate is holy, we only mean that it is the *instrument* to moral agents, for performing religious acts, or for inspiring *holy* and devout thoughts. When, for instance, we affirm that the seventh day of the week was hallowed, or consecrated by God ; we cannot mean that that portion of time was *itself made holy*, or that any portion of time is holier than another : we mean only that the Sabbath was set apart, for the performance of holy and religious duties : Again, when we say that any particular place, or building, is consecrated to God, we do not mean that that particular place or building is itself *holy*—or that God is more *essentially present* there than he was before, and than he is always in every part of space ; but only, that it is *devoted to religious purposes*, is the promised place of the divine manifesta-

tions, and ought therefore to impress us, when we enter it, with more than ordinary sentiments of holy reverence.. In like manner, when the elements in the sacrament are blessed, or consecrated, there is no change made on the elements themselves; they are only set apart, from a common to a holy use, and viewed by worthy communicants, as representing the death of their Redeemer, and confirming their union with Him, as members of his mystical body.

After thus pointing out the absurdity of those, who suppose *the communion of the body, and blood of Christ*, in the sacrament, to mean the communicating of his real body and blood—let us now consider the opinion of those, who explain it, to be the communicating of all the effects of his death and satisfaction. By such, the Lord's Supper is viewed as of the nature of what is called a *feast upon a sacrifice*. And they found their opinion upon this very passage, into the import of which we have been now inquiring. As to eat, say they, of the sacrifices under the law, was to share in all the benefits or effects of those sacrifices,

and as to eat of the things offered up in sacrifice, was to share in all the effects of those idol sacrifices, so to partake of the body and blood of Christ, in the Lord's Supper, is a real communicating of his death and sacrifice ; that is, of all the effects and benefits of it : or, in other words, they maintain, that the Lord's Supper is a feast upon a sacrifice, of the same nature with the feasts upon the Jewish sacrifices under the law, and with the feasts upon the things offered to idols, among the heathens. Now, that there may be another good meaning put upon the passage, is clear, I think, from the interpretation already given of it, and that this latter cannot be its meaning at all, will appear from the following observations.

What has led some to imagine, that the Christian feast has in every respect one common nature with the Jewish and Pagan feasts, is the supposition, that this absolute sameness is essential to the Apostle's argument. But the supposition is groundless ; for though the rites compared be not specifically the same, yet, if they agree in any one particular, the reasoning concerning

them, may be just and conclusive. And if St. Paul's argument, does not require the three rites in question, to be exactly, and in every respect parallels; then it affords no just ground for concluding, that the Lord's Supper is exactly the same kind of rite in the Christian religion, that the Jewish and Heathen feasts upon sacrifice, were in the Jewish and Pagan religions—that is, we have no ground for concluding that the Lord's Supper is specifically a feast upon a sacrifice.

But not only is the idea of the Lord's Supper being a feast upon a sacrifice not necessary to the Apostle's reasoning; it is also utterly inconsistent with the very nature and first principles of the Christian religion. And upon this ground can we demonstrate that it must of necessity be false.

Every rite instituted by the author of any religion, must be consistent with and agreeable to the first and leading principles on which his religion rests. Now, the Lord's Supper is a rite of the Christian religion; therefore, it must be conformable to the fundamental principles of the religion itself. But if the nature of the Jewish and Pagan

feasts upon sacrifice be unconformable to these fundamental principles, then it follows, that the Lord's Supper, and these Jewish and Pagan feasts, must be entirely different in their nature and origin, or, which is the same, the Lord's Supper cannot be like them, a feast upon a sacrifice.—And that the nature of those Jewish and Pagan feasts is really incompatible with the genius and leading principles of Christianity, every one must be sensible who is acquainted with the Scriptures. For among the Jews, many sacrifices were appointed to be offered on account of particular legal offences, and for such offences these sacrifices were viewed as sufficient expiations. Among the Pagans, also, particular sacrifices were offered for particular sins, and considered as expiatory of these sins. And as among both, those who partook of the feasts which followed those sacrifices were always understood to partake of all the benefits procured by the sacrifices: therefore, the partaking of those feasts was viewed both by Jews and Pagans, as a complete expiation of the particular offences for which the sacrifices were offered. Were then the Lord's Supper of the nature of a feast after a sacrifice, it would follow,

that our partaking of this feast, the very action itself, would convey to us an immediate and plenary absolution of all our sins. But this is not a doctrine contained in the Scriptures. No action whatever is there appointed for us to perform under the idea of an expiation of, or atonement for our offences. All forgiveness of sin is there attributed solely to the merits and mediation of Jesus. To suppose, then, that the devoutly receiving of the sacrament is able to do away our guilt and procure the remission of our sins, is both a dangerous and unscriptural doctrine. It is attributing to a single ordinance a power and efficacy quite foreign to its nature. It is ascribing too much to one duty, and depreciating, or rather superseding, the necessity of all others. It is undervaluing the Christian character, by representing grace and remission as capable of being acquired by the operation of man. It is entertaining too light an opinion of the guilt and demerit of sin, to suppose that the preformance of a single action, the celebration of a single rite, will cleanse us from moral impurity, blot out all our offences, and instantly restore us to the friendship of Him who is unspotted

Holiness.—Since, then, both the Jewish and Pagan feasts upon sacrifice, were understood by those who partook of them to be expiations or means of forgiveness of those particular sins for which the sacrifices were offered : And since in the Christian religion, there is not any duty or rite, the performance or celebration of which can of themselves procure for us the forgiveness of any sin, then it follows, that there is not any rite of the Gospel exactly parallel to the Jewish and idol feasts, and consequently that the Lord's Supper is not exactly parallel to them :—Or, in other words, it is not what some have maintained it to be—specifically a *feast upon or after a sacrifice*.

If then communicants, in this sacrament, can be said to partake neither of the *real body and blood of Christ*, nor yet of *all the effects of his death and sacrifice* :—let us now consider the opinion of those, who explain the *communion of the body and blood of Christ*, here mentioned, to mean nothing more, than the *communion or participation of the memorials of his body and blood*. The Lord's Supper, say they, is a simple commemorative rite, the celebration of which has no

internal, spiritual communications accompanying it, more than any other of the solemn duties of our most holy religion. Now, this doctrine is at least plain and intelligible, which is more than can be said of some other doctrines upon this subject. It throws off from this ordinance, that thick veil of mysticism, which has too often separated religion from reason. It tends to free it from that darkness, and superstition, whose untimely fruit, at best, is but a lifeless and rubrical piety. But this doctrine, plain and rational as it may seem, is viewed by many Christians, and particularly by our Church, as not giving a true and complete account of this solemn institution. The sacred elements, say they, are not only memorials of Christ's death, they are also signs and pledges of the conveyance of certain spiritual blessings, which that death purchased. And consequently, all those who worthily communicate, or partake of these outward elements, communicate or partake, at the same time, of those internal and spiritual blessings, which these outward elements exhibit. And what the nature of these spiritual blessings is, which communicants in this ordinance receive, may be un-

derstood, from the nature of those very elements which represent them. As bread is the staff of life ; as it nourishes and supports the frame, and as wine enlivens and gladdens the heart, so the communications of the Spirit, which believers in this ordinance receive, invigorate, comfort, and delight their souls. Now according to this opinion, Christ, though not *corporally*, is really and *spiritually* present in the Sacrament of the Supper, and those happy aids, and influences, which that holy presence imparts, are the benefits, and the comforts with which true Christians are then favoured. And, it is by these aids, and these influences which the Saviour's presence conveys, that the divine life in the soul is cherished and maintained. As vegetables and animals can live only by their connexion with the earth or material system, from which they spring, so a sense of piety and religion in the mind, can be preserved, and strengthened, only by the support and agency of that divine Being who gave it birth. But though it be allowed, that the influences of the Spirit are absolutely necessary to the comfort and the support of the believer, yet, it may be alleged by some,

that the participation of these does not seem to be the natural and obvious meaning of the phrase, "Communion of the "body and blood of Christ." Now, to this we reply, that "partaking of his body "and blood," is a mode of expression employed by Jesus himself, in the very same sense in which we are now supposing St. Paul to employ it. In a discourse, recorded in the 6th Chap. of the Gospel by St. John, Jesus says to the Jews, in the synagogue at Capernaum, "Verily, verily, I say "unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the "Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have "no life in you. Whosoever eateth my "flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal "life, and I will raise him up at the last "day: for my flesh is meat indeed, and "my blood is drink indeed. He that "eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, "dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the "living Father hath sent me, and I live by "the Father, so he that eateth me, even "he shall live by me." Now, these remarkable expressions, have a most striking resemblance to, (indeed they are almost the very same with,) the language of the inspired Apostle, concerning the Sacraiment.

in the passage before us ; and their meaning evidently is, that no man can maintain the dispositions, and lead the life of a true Christian, unless he be united to Christ, as his spiritual head, unless he receive the communications of his grace, and the comforts and aids of his spirit. And the reason why the receiving of these aids, and comforts of the Spirit, is called the “eating of “Christ’s body, and the drinking of his “blood,” or in other words, “the communion of his body and blood,” is because the breaking of his body, and the shedding of his blood, was the great event to which we are indebted for receiving them. Now, since “the communion of the body and “blood of Christ,” means the communicating of the blessed influences of his spirit ; and since the Apostle declares, that Christians do actually enjoy this communion in the Lord’s Supper ; then, it is obvious, that this ordinance is not merely a commemorative rite, in the celebration of which communicants receive no spiritual blessings ; but that on the contrary, it is a heavenly feast, where Christians enjoy delightful, unutterable intercourse with their Saviour, are enlivened with his spirit—are

comforted with his love. Christ's spiritual presence supplies all their wants, and satisfies all their desires. Under the sacred symbols of bread and wine, they have the best and the richest blessings conveyed. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, find themselves filled. Here strength additional is imparted to the strong, support to the weak, consolation to the afflicted, and a seal of a blessed immortality given unto all. This is the jubilee of the saints of God. These are the happy moments, when their hearts burn within them, and experience a secret bliss, beyond the power of the whole world to purchase. Rising to heaven on the wings of faith, the rays of divine light and love beam upon their souls. Filled with ecstasy and sublimed to rapture, they feel a present deity, they taste the joy of God, and already begin to drink of those rivers of pleasures, which for ever flow from beneath his throne.—Are these the privileges of worthy communicants?—are these their holy, heartfelt joys; then let us be anxious to feel the kindling flame of ambition to attain them, glowing in our breasts.—Let us wait upon the Lord, and

beg the bland influence of his grace. Bless the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all his benefits! O, that his high praises were ever in our mouths! - O that we more rejoiced to come into his presence, and worship in his courts! They that are far off from Him shall perish; but they who "are made nigh by the blood of Christ," shall never perish; they shall have everlasting life. And happy the people who are in such a case, yea, happy that man whose God is the Lord.—*Amen.*

THE GRACE OF GOD.

ROMANS V. 20

But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound

ONE of the great objects of the Epistle to the Romans, is to set forth the superior excellence of the Christian above the Mosaic, and every prior dispensation. Accordingly, after a general salutation to the brethren at Rome, and a declaration of his undissembled and ardent affection for them, we find the Apostle expressing his eagerness fully to unfold to them the Christian scheme, and to diffuse, as widely as possible, the knowledge of it among them, because it, and it only, he assures them, was the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. And to vin-

dicate and demonstrate its excellence in this view, he proceeds to point out the extreme and indispensable necessity, under which the whole world lay of cordially embracing it. The Gentiles having no law, were a law unto themselves, and the Jews, misinterpreting the oracles of heaven, were seeking for salvation by the law of Moses. But both, he declares, were confessedly sinners : By the Gentiles, he clearly shows, that the law of nature, had been, times and ways without number, broken, and that of the law of Moses, the Jews themselves were, undeniably, most heinous transgressors. This being the case, he justly infers, that the Jews, as well as the Gentiles, could never, with reason, look for acceptance with their Maker, by any obedience they could render to the law. Nay what is more, instead of looking for the Divine acceptance by the deeds of the law, he boldly affirms, that, in this way, they could look only for wrath and condemnation ; for he adds, "the law entered," not to remove, "the offence"—not to absolve men from its guilt, not to redeem them from its punishment ; but on the contrary, "that the offence might abound,"—that its guilt might be

more deeply aggravated, that the horrible evil of it might be more fully demonstrated, and that the burden of it upon the conscience might be made heavier and more grievous to be borne. "But where sin, " by the entrance of the law, was thus made "to abound, there, declares the Apostle, " did grace much more abound :"—or, in other words, while sin, by the law, became thus more "exceeding sinful," and the fears arising from it more awful and overwhelming, then did the value of that grace which offered deliverance from it appear more magnified, and its riches become more copiously displayed.—The interests of the Gospel of this grace, the Apostle, it appears from the brief view now given of the context, has been all along pleading, and this last, this endearing circumstance relating to it, he here mentions to the persons whom he is addressing, with a view to recommend it the more to their cordial reception ; for to be cordially embraced, he well knew that Divine grace needed only to be fairly represented and fully made known.—We too, if we would hope for salvation, must embrace this grace of God, and to embrace it cordially, we too must study worthily to apprehend it.

I shall now, therefore, in pursuance of the design of the Apostle, endeavour, FIRST, to illustrate the nature and abundance of this Grace : NEXT, guard the grateful doctrine against the abuse that may be made of it : and THEN, direct the mind to the proper improvement of it.

I shall, FIRST, then, endeavour to illustrate the nature and abundance of this Grace.—The term Grace, is generally employed to denote that favour which is conferred, both, without any compulsion on the part of the Giver, and also, without any merit on the part of the Receiver. Both these circumstances, I apprehend, necessarily enter into the notion of grace. For if the giver act, in any wise, under the influence of compulsion, what he gives, may be called a benefit ; but can never, with justice, be denominated grace ; because it wants that entire freedom from constraint, which the only idea we have of grace always implies. Or if, on the other hand, what he gives, be merited on the part of the receiver, far from being the same with what we understand by the term grace, its nature is directly the reverse. It is, in this case.

but giving what the donor was under an obligation to give ; for, to use the language of the Apostle, “ to him that meriteth, the “ reward is not of grace, but of debt.”— The true and only notion, then, which we have of grace, is gratuitous favour given and received ;—unforced from him who gives, and unmerited by him who receives.

The particular display of grace to which the Apostle refers, is the grace of God, in sparing not his only begotten and well-beloved Son, but delivering him up to death for our offences, and then raising him again for our justification. Now this great, this unspeakable gift of God, exactly corresponds to the two leading circumstances just now mentioned, as necessarily entering into the idea of grace. It was uncomelled on the part of our heavenly Father who gave it, and totally unmerited on the part of us his rebellious children, who are invited to receive it.

It was uncomelled on the part of God.
—To think of compulsion being possible to be used over the Almighty, is an idea not only perfectly blasphemous, but to the last

degree glaringly absurd. Clothed with irresistible power, the combined energy of all created beings could never control the operations of his hand: and possessed of infinite knowledge and unerring wisdom, all the policy of the universe would never be able to induce Him to effect what it was not, previously, his pleasure to accomplish.—Hence, it is abundantly evident, that the unspeakable gift of Christ, like all the other gifts of God to the children of men, could not be the forced effect of a constrained and reluctant beneficence; but was the spontaneous fruit of an eternally pure and disinterested love.

It was also grace unmerited on the part of man.—To be capable of meriting from any one, it is necessary both that we be independent of that one, and also that we be able to do him some essential good. But if both these be requisite to merit, how is it possible for us to merit of our Maker? As creatures, it was from his infinite goodness alone, that we were brought into existence;—and as sinners, it is because his compassions fail not, that we are not consumed. For almost every thought of our

hearts, and every action of our lives, we have reason, rather to sue for pardon than seek for reward. We are unworthy of any, even the smallest of the ordinary gifts of God's providence, and surely much less worthy are we of his greatest and best gift —that of his only begotten Son.

Thus doth it appear that Christ, and the benefits through Him to be obtained, are, in the strictest and properst sense of the term, denominated *grace*; for they are, on the one hand, bestowed by God, without the least compulsion, and, are on the other hand, to be received by man, without the slightest claim to them, as his reward.

But, besides thus barely considering the *nature* of this grace, let us also attend to its unparalleled *abundance*. And truly we can say, that, in this view, it appears to be unspeakable. It surpasses all the powers of language to express, and, I may safely add, even the powers of imagination fully to conceive.—The circumstances which tend most to enhance the value of any particular instance of grace, must surely be the surpas-

sing worth of the gift itself; the high rank of him who bestows it; the expense at which it was bestowed, and the meanness and ill-desert of those upon whom it is bestowed.—Now, all these enhancing and endearing circumstances, we cannot but be sensible, conspire to increase to us the value of the riches of that grace, which we are now endeavouring to contemplate. For let us only think of the incomparable blessings which it confers: of the dignity both of that Being who originally designed, and of Him who was appointed to confer them; of the unprecedented humiliation and sufferings submitted to, in order to confer them;—and to crown all, let us think of the low condition and guilty character of those upon whom they are conferred.—Let all this be duly meditated, and I am fully persuaded, that even the most prejudiced and unfeeling will be ready to join the Apostle and say, that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

To aid our conceptions upon this subject, we are *first* to consider the incomparable blessings which this grace confers.

Now, of these incomparable blessings, one of the chief is, *the forgiveness of sin*.—We are all the descendants of a rebel, and are therefore, by nature, the children of wrath. We are all rebels ourselves, and therefore justly deserve to have our portion in the lake of torment with the angels who fell.—But “to them who are in Christ “Jesus, there is no such condemnation.”—“Be it known unto you, therefore, men and “brethren, (declares the Apostle,) that “through this Man is preached unto you “the forgiveness of sin *.”—From sin, whether open or secret; from sin, whether remembered or forgotten; from all sin, however circumstanced, or however aggravated, doth this grace of God bring us salvation. And O! my soul! my guilty soul! how great, how precious is this salvation! With it, all the kingdoms of this world, and all the glories of them, are not worthy to be compared. But this, great and precious as it is, is not the only blessing which is offered us.

* Acts xxii. 38.

The gift of *reconciliation* accompanies the blessing of pardon.—“When we were enemies, say the Scriptures, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son *.” Not only were our offences forgiven ; but our persons accepted as righteous. Not only were we made free from condemnation ; but restored to favour, and visited with love :—restored to that favour which is better than life, and visited with that love which passeth understanding.

And thus pardoned, and thus reconciled, we are also *sanctified*, made *holy* in all manner of conversation. Let none ever think that the grace revealed in the Gospel is hostile to the interests of true *morality*. Morality is the very image of God, and is charmingly delineated through the whole of his Sacred Word. It is only when men cordially “receive the grace of God,” that they become *truly moral*. After dry instructions or abstract reasonings, have proved to be of no avail, then “the grace of God” appears, and invites, urges, con-

* Rom. v. 10.

strains us to abstinence from vice and to the practice of virtue. Then “ the flesh “ is crucified with its lusts, and the spirit “ adorned with righteousness and true ho-“ liness. Old things are past away ; be-“ hold, all things are become new. The “ Spirit regenerates our affections : Christ “ dwelleth in our hearts : We are rooted “ and grounded in love : We are filled with “ all the fulness of God.”

And so freed from sin, and at peace with God, what is there on earth of which we need to be afraid ? The afflictions of life need not move us ; even *death* itself need not alarm us ;—for to us, “ to live is Christ, “ and to die, is gain.” We then enter in- to our rest ; we sit down with Jesus upon his throne, receive from Him the crown of life, and shine like the stars, for ever and ever, in the kingdom of our Father. And O ! what a great, what an unspeakable privilege is this ! Where is the tongue of mortal man, that can describe its surpas- sing value ? Language fails, nay, thought itself is overpowered, when we attempt so high a theme. Great surely was the bles- sing to be brought from nothing into exist-

ence, and greater far does the blessing become, when our existence is long continued, and its comforts richly multiplied. But to have our existence continued evermore, to enjoy it in the company of Jesus, and the immediate presence of God ;—freed from every imperfection, exalted with every honour, and surrounded with every joy ;—this is a blessing such as no tongue can express, and for which no heart can be sufficiently grateful. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared, in heaven, for the righteous.

Such are some of the chief of those incomparable blessings, which Divine Grace confers. But to raise our conceptions, on this subject, still higher, let us next consider the dignity, both of that Being who originally designed, and of Him who was appointed to confer them.

Our idea of any gift is magnified, not only by the superlative value of the gift itself, but also by the real, or supposed greatness of the giver. The same favour con-

ferred by an inferior, or even an equal, acquires, in our estimation, a more than double excellence, when it comes to us from one whom we regard as more than ordinarily superior. But who in greatness can be likened unto God? Who among the sons of the mighty, can be brought into comparison with Him? He createth worlds by the word of his mouth; the nations are as the dust of the balance before him, and he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. Yet He, great, Almighty and unequalled as he is, condescended to visit with his grace the abodes of men. He it was who condescended to remember us in our "time of need," and devise the wondrous scheme of redeeming us from iniquity.

But wherewithal shall this redemption be accomplished? Will the blood of bulls or of goats, or of the cattle upon a thousand hills, be accounted a sufficient offering? Alas! weak and worthless to the last degree, considered in themselves, are all such beggarly oblations. Shall then one of the angels of light, descending from on high, be commissioned with this work of mercy? Alas! in the councils of heaven, the angels

themselves cover their faces with their wings, and stand back as unequal to the arduous undertaking. But still, God willeth not that any of his children should perish, and His own arm brings them deliverance. He himself finds out a ransom, and lays our help upon him, who is mighty to save. But who is this who is mighty to save, and in the councils of the Eternal appointed to deliver us ? The dignity of him also, conspires with the dignity of the Father to increase, if possible, the abundance of the grace. No less a person was he, than "the Son of God,—the only begotten Son of God, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of God. Angels indeed are called the "sons of God; but unto which of the angels, "said he at any time, thou art my son, "this day have I begotten thee?"—In this then was manifested the love of God towards us, because he spared not his own Son, his only begotten Son, but freely gave him up to death for us all. Surely if the love of the giver, appears magnified by the worth and excellence of the gift, never, never, we can safely say, was there love like that with which the father hath loved us. Had He sent but one of the angels, who

surround his throne, to effect this work of salvation, and one who could have fulfilled his purpose, doubtless we should have had reason to celebrate this goodness with everlasting songs of praise ;—but to send the Son of his bosom, the only begotten of his love,—One who was infinitely more precious than all worlds,—to send Him on this errand of grace ;—here the subject becomes too high for the human faculties to reach, and too overpowering for the mental eye to behold. Able, O God ! only to say, that “this is not the manner of men,” we must, humbly and at a distance, adore what we shall never be able fully to comprehend.

But if the blessings of redemption are thus enhanced to us by the dignity both of the Being who designed, and of Him who was appointed to confer them, these blessings cannot but be still more enhanced, when we reflect, also, upon the unparalleled humiliation and sufferings submitted to, in order to confer them.

If the redemption of the world was to be accomplished, and if no less a person than the Son of God was fitted to accomplish it, might not he with the same ease with which

he created, have also redeemed us ? In redeeming us, was it indeed necessary that he should leave the mansions of bliss, and the armies of heaven, to live on earth and tabernacle among men ? Yes, to stoop so low as this was deemed necessary for the Captain of our Salvation. He left the heavens and came down, and, with condescension unparalleled, dwelt among us.

But though he did thus humble himself and dwell among us, yet was not he clothed with the ensigns of celestial majesty, or did not he appear to the world environed with some visible glory ?—No, for us men, and for our salvation, even every thing like this he was willing to lay aside for a season. Though he was the Lord of angels, and the Maker of the worlds, yet was he made, in all things, like unto his brethren. Though he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet was he found in fashion as a man, and made in the likeness of sinful flesh !—And here is contained a mystery of grace, which the prying mind may desire to look into, but which its feeble eye cannot penetrate. It is a mystery which will employ the thoughts

of the most exalted seraphs, and be the exhaustless source of their highest admiration, “ world without end.”

But though the Son of God did thus descend into the vale of mortality, and divest himself, for a while, of that glory with which he shone from the beginning, yet might he not, at least, have come forth in the pomp of an earthly sovereign ; with all that majesty and magnificence which captivates the attention, and raises the esteem of men ? —No, even this also, did it please the Father that the Son of his love should forego. His first appearance was in the midst of disgrace and obscurity, and from his cradle to his grave we behold but one melancholy scene of ignominy and oppression, of poverty and of pain. He was born, we are told, in a stable, and laid in a manger. And when he grew up, he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He wandered about from place to place, and though heir of all things, had not where to lay his head. By some, he was reproached as a sower of sedition ; by others, reviled as an impostor ; by some, he was accused as a blasphemer ; by others, even branded as a sorcerer and

a devil. And thus through every stage of his life, was the innocent Jesus doomed to "bear the contradiction of sinners against himself." But follow him to the last scene; —follow him to the scene of his sufferings and death, and things yet more wonderful will open to our view. Behold the Lord of Glory dragged as a felon and condemned as a slave,—behold him prostrate upon the ground in an agony, and extended with racking torture upon the cross.—Behold him, in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood, and on the hill of Calvary bowing his head, pouring out his soul, and giving up the ghost,—and then "ask of the days that are past, which were "before thee, since the day that God created "man upon the earth, and ask from the one "side of heaven unto the other," whether there was ever sorrow like that sorrow which was endured by the Saviour of the world, or such an abundance of grace shown as was then shown to the children of men.

But that this abundant grace may appear in its fullest extent, and be displayed in all its lustre, let us also reflect upon the character and condition of those upon whom it

was thus freely and immeasurably bestowed. Was it upon those who did justly and loved mercy, and walked humbly before God? Was it upon those who never once offended him, but who rejoiced always to fulfil his pleasure? Or was it even upon those who, though they had offended him, yet mourned for their offence, and on their bended knees were imploring his forgiveness?—Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished thou earth! for it was upon those whose character was directly the reverse that Divine Grace conferred salvation. It was upon the ungrateful and rebellious; upon those who had not God in all their thoughts, who were as far from imploring his mercy as they were from deserving it, who were running blindfold upon their own ruin, and by their wicked works sinking themselves deeper and deeper in the bottomless gulph of wretchedness and woe;—it was for these, for the redemption and everlasting happiness of these, that the Most High over all the earth, laid bare his own almighty arm, spared not his only begotten Son, but laid upon him the iniquities of us all, delivered him up to contempt and persecution, to agony and torture, to death and the grave.—This is

the grace of God, and it surpasseth knowledge. This “is the Lord’s doing, and it “is wondrous in our eyes.”

But lest this abundance of grace, which the truly pious soul will ever remember with gratitude, and delight to glory in, should by any, be perverted into an occasion of licentiousness, I should now proceed to guard men against the abuse that may be made of it, and direct their minds to the proper improvement of it. But upon this I forbear, at present, to enter. Suffice it now for me to say, that if this unparalleled grace dwell not upon our minds, if it win not our affections, and sweetly constrain us to obey and to love, we must be insensible to the charms of goodness, and lost to every finer feeling of the human heart. We are a disgrace to our nature, we are stains in the creation, we are the monsters of our kind. Heaven will blush, the earth, gross as it is, may be shocked;—yea, hell itself may be ashamed to witness our ingratitude.

THE GRACE OF GOD.

ROMANS V. 20.

But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

THE chief end of the Apostle, in writing this epistle to the Romans, is to convince them of the great superiority of the gospel above the legal dispensation. The law denounces the sentence of death ; but the gospel, he informs them, delivers the words of eternal life. By the law, the whole world is concluded under sin, and declared obnoxious both to present and future punishment ; but from this sin and its necessary punishment, the grace of God, published in the gospel, provides a complete redemption. This redemption, indeed, there were some who expected to be obtained by the law ;

but all such expectations, the Apostle clearly proves to be not only vain but preposterous; for the law entered, he adds, not to remove "the offence," not to free men from its guilt, or ransom them from its punishment, but, on the contrary, "that 'the offence might abound,'" that its guilt might appear more aggravated, and the awful punishment annexed to it, more justly merited. But where sin, by the entrance of the law, was thus made to abound, there did that grace which is manifested in the gospel much more abound:—"its amazing extent more fully appeared, and its unsearchable riches became more copiously displayed. This grace of God which the Apostle himself always gloried in, and which he is here at so much pains to illustrate to his brethren, I too would, after his example, earnestly recommend to all, as a most improving subject of thought, and as a doctrine worthy of the most cordial acceptance.

To state, therefore, the nature and abundance of this grace; then, to guard men against the abuse that may be made of it; and next, to direct their minds to the pro-

per improvement of it, is what I have proposed in the discussion of this subject.— To the elucidation of the first of these topics only, I have, as yet, confined my attention.— The term *grace*, it has been observed, is employed to denote that favour which is conferred, both without any compulsion on the part of the giver, and also without any merit on the part of the receiver. And the grace of God, in delivering up his only begotten Son for our offences, and raising him again for our justification, which is the grace here meant, exactly corresponds, it was remarked, to the two leading circumstances in this definition. It was uncomelled on the part of our Heavenly Father who gave it, and totally unmerited on the part of us, his rebellious children, who are invited to receive it. And after thus defining its nature, I proceeded to illustrate its unparalleled abundance. Accordingly, to aid our conceptions upon this subject, I solicited devout attention, *first*, to the incomparable blessings which this grace confers; *next*, to the dignity both of that Being who originally designed, and of him who was appointed to confer them; *then* to the unprecedented humiliation and sufferings submitted to, in order to con-

fer them ; and, *lastly*, to the mean condition and guilty character of those upon whom they are conferred ;—I solicited, I say, devout attention to all these enhancing and endearing circumstances, and if such attention has been given them, I may now be permitted to ask, if this grace doth not appear truly astonishing ? Doth not its greatness exceed all our powers of utterance ? Nay are we not constrained to acknowledge, that its abundance is such, as neither man nor any finite being can adequately conceive.

But as the greatest and best of blessings may be abused, and as they are the greatest and best of blessings, which are generally most abused, I now proceed, in the **SECOND PLACE**, to guard men against the particularly dangerous abuse, which, by the ignorant and wicked, may be made of this grace, which, “ where sin abounded, did much more abound.”

So corrupt is human nature, that the more kindly we are dealt with, the more ungrateful, often, do we become. We immoderately presume upon the generous and forgiving spirit of our benefactor, and instead of endea-

vouring to deserve his favour; and to act agreeably to his will, we, frequently, make no ceremony of neglecting what he commands, or of even wilfully doing what he has positively forbidden.—Now the same base and disingenuous returns which men make to their earthly benefactors, they have the unaccountable vileness, also, to make to their Heavenly Father, only with this difference; that to Him, their base and disingenuous returns, are much more numerous, and infinitely more deeply aggravated. As it is upon his goodness, that their existence is wholly dependant, so it is with his numberless blessings, that this existence is gladdened and adorned. Yet instead of making these blessings the means of their own true happiness, and of the promotion of his glory, they, to their disgrace, frequently make them the means of oppression, and devote them to the purposes of iniquity. And of none of his blessings, of no particular instance of his grace, has the abuse been more notorious than of that grace which he hath manifested to us in the gospel of his Son. Because it hath abounded, men have, often, made their sins also to abound. Because it hath been slow to

punish them, therefore have they been, often, so unnatural as to harden their hearts, and indulge themselves in their crimes: Even so early as in the days of the Apostles, the primitive preachers of this grace, did there appear some who, in this way, turned it into licentiousness. Mark how St. Peter describes their character, and in these emphatic words, pronounces their guilt and condemnation. “The Lord, (says he,) knoweth “how to reserve the unjust to the day of “judgment to be punished; but chiefly “them that walk after the flesh, in the lust “of uncleanness—They shall utterly perish “in their own corruption, and shall receive “the reward of unrighteousness: they “count it pleasure to riot in the day time: “spots they are and blemishes, sporting “themselves with their own deceivings;— “having eyes full of adultery, and that can- “not cease from sin, beguiling unstable “souls; an heart they have exercised with “covetous practices; cursed children!—to “whom the mist of darkness is reserved “for ever; for when they speak great “swelling words of vanity, they allure, “through the lusts of the flesh, through “much wantonness, those that were clean

“ escaped from them who live in error.
“ While they promise them liberty, they
“ themselves are the seryants of corruption;
“ for of whom a man is overcome, of the same
“ is he brought in bondage. For if after
“ they have escaped the pollutions of the
“ world, through the knowledge of the Lord
“ and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again
“ entangled therein and overcome, the lat-
“ ter end is worse with them than the be-
“ ginning; for it had been better for them
“ not to have known the way of righteous-
“ ness, than after they have known it, to
“ turn from the holy commandment deli-
“ vered unto them; but it is happened un-
“ to them according to the true proverb,—
“ The dog is turned to his own vomit again,
“ and the sow that was washed, to her wal-
“ lowing in the mire *.” And to correct a
similar abuse which some were then making
of the grace of the gospel, St. Jude also
states as the reason which induced him to
write his epistle.—“ It was needful for me
“ to write unto you, and exhort you, (said
“ he, to the Christians whom he addressed,)
“ that ye should earnestly contend for the
“ faith which was once delivered unto the

“ saints, for there are certain men crept in
“ unawares, who were before of old ordained
“ to this condemnation; ungodly men turn-
“ ing the grace of our God into lascivious-
“ ness *.”

Before the first preachers of Christianity had sealed their testimony with their blood, there were many known by the name of Gnostics and Nicolaitans, who had entered the Church, persons who were base pretenders to the faith of the gospel, who talked loudly indeed of its free grace, but abused what they affected to praise, by making it a handle for giving way to the most criminal indulgencies. They had the audacity, for instance, openly to maintain, that lewdness was lawful, that to equivocate was justifiable, and that to conform, occasionally, to the ceremonies of the heathen, perfectly harmless: and embracing such abandoned principles, they, as might naturally be expected, followed after all manner of vice and villainy with greediness. And this their impious and abominable system, they inherited from Simon Magus, the father of, ~~most~~, every heresy. That daring impos-

tor, that “child of the devil, and enemy of “all righteousness,” never ceased to pervert the good way of the Lord, but abused the freedom of the Gospel, and indulged in habits of the most avowed impurity. And the enormities which he himself was not ashamed to commit, he had the more than common flagitiousness, not only openly to defend, but even eagerly to invite his adherents to practise. From the injunctions of the ancient Scriptures, he told them that they needed not be under the smallest restraint : for these, he profanely asserted, were no longer, in reality, the oracles of God, and consequently were unworthy to be regarded.—“ Believe in me, (said he,) and “ live as you please ; mind not the threatenings of the law ; remember that the “ salvation of the Gospel is wholly of grace, “ and that the practice of good works, a “ grievous imposition of the law of Moses, “ is now abolished by the cross of Christ.” These are the paradoxes which this man of sin advanced, and by some weak and wicked minds they were greedily received. They flattered themselves with what they called liberty, and they made themselves the servants of sin ; for seduced by their leader’s

example, and ensnared by his pernicious persuasion, they denied themselves the gratification of no darling lust, but became voluntarily bound in the ignominious shackles of every species of corruption.—But such persons would have done well to have considered, that the doctrine of grace could never have been intended by a holy God, to be established upon the ruins of virtue. Accordingly the economy of grace was introduced to abrogate, not the *moral*, but only the *ceremonial* law.—The *moral* law necessarily arises out of the nature of things, and therefore cannot be abrogated. It is immutable as the Divinity himself. It existed in his will, before the foundations of the earth were laid, and it shall continue to exist, when the heavens are rolled up like a scroll, and the elements melted with fervent heart. But though this is unquestionably true, yet it appears equally true, that as soon as the wondrous grace of the gospel was promulgated, mankind showed themselves prone to abuse it,—so prone, we see, that the abuse of it was one of the gross abominations introduced by the very first heretic who ever infested the true followers of Jesus.—And, would to God! that this impious abuse had been confined entirely

to those early ages. Would to God ! that we could say, that such detestable characters had no existence in these latter times. But, alas ! it is a melancholy truth, which we must confess, that still there is “a generation of vipers” who infest the christian church, and turn the grace of God into wantonness. They seem to be zealous in proclaiming its praise; but by their deeds they show themselves to be utter strangers to its power. They pretend to be high admirers of its unsearchable riches ; but their unsanctified temper and conduct clearly demonstrate that they have neither lot nor part in the matter. However boasting-ly they may talk, they are still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, no less than Simon was, the first founder of their impiety : For if any man be under the influence of divine grace, we have the divine authority itself for saying, that he is then dead unto sin, and lives unto righteousness. Created again in Christ Jesus, he walks not after the flesh ; but after the Spirit.

It must be admitted and lamented, that there have been some dreaming Antinomians so absurd and impious as pertinaci-

ously to maintain, that grace is a special exemption from moral obligations. Perverting to the worst of purposes this declaration of the Apostle, *that we are not under the law but under grace*, they have made the ignorant believe that grace supersedes and annuls the necessity of practical holiness.

Now it cannot, indeed, be denied, that he who is under grace, that is, he who knows, and feels duly grateful to God for his redeeming love, and manifests his gratitude by his unreserved and habitual obedience, is so far not under the moral law, as that he is not subject to its condemnation, for “against such there is no law;” but he is and must for ever be under that law, so far as he is not exempted from its obligations. For, between being free from the condemnation of the moral law, and being released from obedience to it, there is a wide difference. A man may be free from the penalties of injustice, but can never be privileged from the duties of justice: he may, by his good life and conduct, not be obnoxious to civil punishment; but he cannot, therefore, be exempted from the prohibition to steal or to slay.—Those who are “led by the Spirit,” are said to be “not under the law;”—and why? because they “walk in the Spirit, and fulfil not

"the lust of the flesh*." They are anxious to abstain from those sins which exclude men from the kingdom of heaven, and zealous to cultivate that holiness which issues in eternal, and eternally increasing happiness.

—Thus grace does not grant an exemption from any of the duties which the law requires, but rather stimulates to their performance. Nay, by the most powerful motives, and the most interesting persuasions, it impels us to do those things which the spirit as well as the letter of the law commands. Under the law, we are strictly prohibited from doing evil : but under grace we are constrained to do good; the law ordains justice, grace inspues charity, which is the bond of perfectness. The law inculcates duty from motives of reverence and fear ; but grace from those of gratitude and love.—What shall we sin then, because "we are not under the law, but under grace?"—God forbid ! This cannot be ; because when we receive the grace of God, we are supposed to be : dead to sin, and how shall they "who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" We cannot, in the scriptural sense of the words, be "dead to sin, without becoming the servants of righteousness†.

* Gal v 19 - 21 &c.

† Rom vi 1.

A viler and more unfounded calumny, then, the father of lies himself could not have invented, than that the grace of the gospel relaxes, in the least degree, the obligations of morality.

But in the refutation of this calumny, it seems necessary to be still more particular. Let us consider, therefore, the genuine nature of this grace, and also the sentiments which it is calculated to inspire; —and if the god of this world has not totally blinded our eyes, we shall immediately perceive, that nothing but the most diabolical perversion of mind, could ever have induced men to stain so fair a doctrine with so foul an imputation.

What then is the nature of this grace, or, in other words, what are those inestimable blessings which it confers? The chief of these, I have formerly said, are—pardon of sin—reconciliation with God—sanctification of heart and life—victory over death, and an entrance into the pure and everlasting enjoyments of heaven.—But is there a man living who will have the effrontery to say, that any, or all of these, afford the

smallest encouragement to licentiousness ? Because to every one who sincerely repents, his sins are promised to be pardoned ; can this imply that he need not repent, that he may sin on, for his sins shall pass unpunished ? Because believers are declared to be reconciled to God, and admitted to all the privileges of his children ; can this ever be an inducement to them to let go their integrity, and again render themselves abominable in his sight ? Because the gospel comes to sanctify our hearts, to renew us in the spirit of our minds, and to assure us that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin : is this leading us to indulge in fleshly lusts, and to count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing ? Or because besides being supported and comforted through life, we are likewise promised to have dominion in the dread hour of death ; will this be said to be a reason also for going on in presumptuous sin, when sin, we know, and above all, presumptuous sin, is the very monster that arms death with its sting, and gives the grave its victory ? But not only do believers triumph in death ; an entrance, after death, is ministered to them abundantly, into the immediate presence of the Lord, and

into all the fullness of the joys of eternity. Now that this glorious privilege, in particular, which is indeed the completion of all the other privileges of the "elect of God," cannot, in the nature of things, afford any, even the least plea for looseness of conduct, I am confident, there is not one who will have the audacity to deny; for all who reasonably expect to behold the face of God, in heaven, naturally purify themselves, even as God is pure. Their hope of happiness, is connected indissolubly with a conviction of the necessity of holiness; for "without holiness, no man can see the Lord." While glory, honour, and immortality, are the future portion of all who patiently continue in well doing,—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, must, unbounded as the grace of God is, be the miserable fate of every soul who doeth evil.

But as in order to heighten our ideas of the grace of God, we considered not only the blessings which it confers, but likewise the character both of that Being who originally designed, and of him who was appointed to confer them, together with the unprecedented humiliation and sufferings

submitted to, in order to confer them, and the low condition and guilty character of those upon whom they are conferred; so let us here also take into view these additional considerations, and we shall, if possible, be still more convinced, that this grace, rendered thus more abundant, can nevertheless give no encouragement to the workers of iniquity.—For was it God who devised this gracious scheme of our salvation, and can the scheme which he devised be favourable to licentiousness? Perish the impious thought!—for “the righteous Lord loveth “righteousness,” and sin and sinners are an abomination in his sight. Or when this gracious scheme of salvation was devised, was it Jesus, the Son of God, who was appointed to carry it into effect? And is it possible that the work which was then given the blessed Jesus to do, was a work which loosened the obligations of virtue, or superseded the necessity of holiness? The idea is too full of absurdity, too big with horrible blasphemy, for the mind, even for a moment, so much as to conceive. For this would be making Christ, “the minister of sin,” who himself “knew no sin,” —nay, who was manifested in the flesh.

for the express purpose of abolishing sin, and " bringing in an everlasting righteousness." And if we add to this, the deep abasement to which he submitted, the excruciating pains which he bore, and the indescribable agony which he patiently endured, the blasphemous supposition, that he could thus be manifested for a contrary purpose, become tenfold more blasphemous.—The guilty character, and forlorn condition of the persons to whom this grace of the gospel is extended, has been mentioned as an additional proof of its unparalleled abundance; and it may here be introduced as an additional proof also, that it could never be intended to give the smallest countenance to vicious indulgence. Sin is the exhaustless source of misery, and it was by man's becoming a sinner, that he became " poor and wretched, and " blind and miserable." The hand therefore that shall deliver him from misery, must first deliver him from sin. The grace of the gospel holds forth this deliverance, and upon this ground, also, are we warranted to say, that it is hostile to the practice of iniquity. For were it not hostile, but favourable, as the ignorant or ungodly have sometimes

averred, then, instead of being grace, it would rather be condemnation : instead of restoring us to happiness, it would rather, by augmenting our sin, augment our misery : instead of delivering us from going down to the pit, it would rather, by adding to our guilt, sink us deeper and deeper in wretchedness and woe.

Thus do we see, from considering the very nature of this grace, how abhorrent it is of all manner of licentiousness.—But besides reasoning, in this way, from its nature, let me now, to make the argument, if possible, still more complete, appeal to the sentiments which the grace revealed in the gospel is calculated to inspire.—Love, we know, naturally begets love ; and is it then natural for divine grace to beget ingratitude ?—A multiplicity of unexpected blessings bestowed naturally produce a most intimate and inviolable friendship ; and is it natural for the very richest and highest blessings which heaven has in store, only to increase neglect, and prompt to disobedience ? Much happiness imparted, and many splendid honours freely conferred, naturally incline the feeling soul to impart happiness

and render honour in return ; and is it then really natural for the grace of God, which offers no less a happiness than the happiness of angels, which honours with no less an honour than the crown of immortality :— is it natural for this grace, thus richly blessing, and thus highly honouring, to make men only slight the authority of its adorable Author; to make them “only crucify afresh” his beloved Son, and, by their wicked works, put him to open shame ?—Ye who are the children of this grace, I appeal to you, for you know its value :—I appeal to you, and tell me, if, of all things impossible, this, if I may so express myself, seemeth not the most impossible. Tell me, O Christians ! for ye can tell me from experience, if this grace of God, instead of leading to carnal liberty and criminal indulgence, doth not rather incite the mind to repentance, and compel it, in the multitude of its thoughts, thus to say :—“ God hath saved me ; Christ “ hath died for me : I am then no longer “ mine own ; I am bought with a price, and “ therefore will live no more to myself, “ but to God who saved me, to Christ who “ died for me and rose again. And now, “ let my right hand forget its cunning, and

"let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I adhere not to this purpose which I have formed, if I devote not myself for ever to the Lord, if I live not in his service, if I die not in his fear, and if, living or dying, I be not the Lord's."

These are the blessed effects which, I am persuaded, the grace of God, revealed in the gospel, is naturally fitted to produce;—and to show a becoming solicitude, that they may feel it producing these blessed effects upon their minds, is the proper improvement which I would earnestly pray every one of my fellow-creatures to make of it. To urge them to comply with this request, and to point out particularly the manner in which their compliance should be manifested, is an important part, which I must not attempt, at present, fully to execute, but reserve as a separate subject of discussion. It is most foolish needlessly to fatigue, and, perhaps thus to offend, when our avowed object is to interest and to edify. Yet I cannot conclude without expressing my ardent wish, that I myself and all mankind would duly ponder the glorious doctrine which has been now stated,

would think often and maturely upon the nature and abundance of the grace of God, and upon the great and wondrous things which it hath done for our souls. And while we think often and maturely of this, may we think also of the grateful and admiring sentiments which we ought to feel, and "what manner of persons we ought "to be in all holy conversation and godliness."—"To whomsoever much is given, "of him shall be much required." To us much grace hath been given, and, of consequence, proportionally great, will be the account, which, at the general judgment, we must render. O that we were wise, that we seriously considered this!—considered the indispensable obligations which we are under, and the multitude of mercies which we are daily invited to enjoy!—And as a proof that we consider them aright, may we plead for the pardon of our numberless sins, and for grace to help us in every time of need;—to help us to forego all earth-born cares, to abstain from all fleshly lusts, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. This is the great, the best, and indeed the only indubitable evidence which we can give the world, that we have received the

grace of God, in reality. “ By this, (saith “ our Lord himself,) shall all men know that “ ye are my disciples, if ye keep my com-“ mandments.” Henceforth then, let us walk, “ not as other Gentiles walk, in the “ vanity of their mind ;—but walk worthy “ of the Lord, and be followers of him as “ dear children. Let us be blameless and “ harmless, the Sons of God, without re-“ buke, in the midst of a crooked and per-“ verse nation; that among them we may “ shine as lights in the world, holding forth “ the word of life.—Finally, whatsoever “ things are true, whatsoever things are “ venerable, whatsoever things are just, “ whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever “ things are lovely, whatsoever things are “ of good report ;—if there be any virtue, “ and if there be any praise, let us think “ on these things,” and pray to God, with- “ out ceasing, that we may faithfully practise them. And happy for us, shall it be, if we prove wise enough to do so. Great grace shall be multiplied upon us; the joys of salvation shall visit us; so long as we live, we shall live in comfort; when we come to die, we shall die in peace; and after death, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear.

we shall also, with myriads of his saints, appear with Him in glory.—What an exhilarating, what an enobling prospect, this! —Hope followed by fruition; earth exchanged for heaven; grace, abundant grace, and then an exceeding, an eternal weight of glory!!!—Amen, and Amen!—So be it, Lord Jesus!!

THE GRACE OF GOD.

ROMANS V. 20

But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound

Sin naturally fills her votaries with remorse, and renders them obnoxious to inevitable misery. Accordingly, no sooner did the fallen angels rebel against their Lord, than they forfeited their seats in the abodes of happiness. They were cast down from their radiant thrones in heaven, and consigned to the gloomy horrors of the lowest hell. Man, too, on the same fatal day on which he lost his primeval innocence, and transgressed the law of his God, was expelled the bower of paradise, subjected to misery and devoted to death. And, in this his awful doom, were included, not only the sorrows

of a present life, and the pangs of a natural dissolution, but also those indescribable torments of a remorseful conscience, and those terrible inflictions of divine wrath reserved for apostates in the world to come. Such are the direful sufferings which, it was threatened, sin should entail, and which therefore man, when he became a sinner, might justly expect to bear. But behold the goodness of indulgent Heaven ; behold the tender mercies of the everlasting God ! He who spared not the angels when they fell, remembered our frame, and was moved with compassion for our guilty race. When man expected vengeance, divine love only was shown : when his sin abounded, the grace of God, to the astonishment of the universe, did much more abound : its extent became peculiarly manifested, and its unsearchable riches, though not in reality increased, yet to our wondering view, were much more copiously displayed.—Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, were justly merited ; but deliverance from guilt, restoration to the favour of God, and admittance to those eternal joys which are at his right hand, were freely conferred.—And this deliverance from guilt, this

restoration to the divine favour, and admittance to eternal joy, God himself, who foresaw our fall, from all eternity ordained. Before he created the world, before he commanded the light to arise, ere ever his spirit had moved upon the face of the waters, his thoughts of mercy were towards the children of men. And when the fulness of time was come, (blessing, and honour, and glory be to his name;) He sent forth no less a person than Jesus, his only begotten Son, to carry into effect this gracious purpose, which from the beginning he had formed. Him he appointed to descend from heaven to tabernacle upon earth, to feel our infirmities, to remove our guilt, to die for our sakes. And in fulfilling this arduous work which was given him to do, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of life, declined no act of humiliation, turned aside from no face of danger, refused submission to no form of suffering, which it pleased the Father; that as the Saviour of a lost world, he should undergo. Though his name was high above every name, yet did he make himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he hum-

bled himself, and patiently bore all the griefs, and carried all the sorrows which sinful man was heir to. He lived surrounded with disgrace and persecution ; and when he died, it was under the accumulated load of ignominy and torture, of inexpressible agony and excruciating pain.—All this, O Christian ! hath God, in his grace, done for thy soul. Duly and frequently contemplate this grace ; contemplate the wonders which it hath wrought, and the immortal happiness which it confers,—and then say if it is not grace without a parallel ; say if its height and depth, and breadth and length, surpass not all the powers of the highest intelligence even to conceive. So amazing indeed is its extent, so incomprehensible its abundance, that some there are, who have thence been furnished with a pretence for disputing its existence; nay representing it as incredible. “ Wherefore, (say they,) “ so many and so inconceivable blessings “ conferred upon us ? What is man that he “ should be so wonderfully favoured ; or “ what is the son of man, the creature of “ dust, the worm but of yesterday, that he “ should be visited with such abundant “ grace ?”—But in reply to this we need

only observe, that it is enough for us to be assured of the fact, though we be not able to comprehend all the reasons upon which it is founded. Among other reasons, however, there is one that appears sufficiently obvious, namely, that all this hath doubtless been ordained with a view to maintain the order and dignity of the Divine government, and, at the same time, to secure, as far as was possible, the restoration of human happiness. It was, doubtless, with a view signally to demonstrate the malignity of sin, and allure to the practice of holiness. It was, doubtless, with a view to overcome our evil with good, and to draw us with the cords of love and the bands of a man. It was, in short, with a view, both to render it meet for God to bestow, and also to qualify us, his distressed and fallen children, to receive all that fulness of joy which he had prepared for us in heaven before the world existed, before time itself began.— And to inspire the mind with an earnest desire; to excite it strenuously to endeavour, that this wondrous display of grace may accomplish the blessed end designed by it, is the great and only object which I now propose to prosecute.

I have already had occasion to illustrate sufficiently the nature and abundance of the grace of the gospel, and also to guard men against the fatal abuse which the ignorant and the wicked may be disposed to make of it. All, therefore, that now remains for me to do, is to entreat my fellow creatures **RIGHTLY TO RECEIVE, AND WISELY TO IMPROVE IT.**

And in the first place, I must aver, that it is our duty, that it is the least return we can make for the grace of God, to cherish in our breasts the most admiring *gratitude*. This, we all know, is an amiable sentiment which, upon the experience of great and unmerited goodness, spontaneously arises in the generous soul. Its nature is such as invariably to felicitate and adorn its possessor, to make him command our approbation, and necessarily prompt us to love him, and, as much as we can, to do him good. But the man, in whose bosom this lovely sentiment never glows,—it is not enough for us to say, that we behold him with indifference; we mark him with detestation. We deny his kindred with humanity; we sink him below the level of the

brutes. For even “the ox knoweth his own-
“er, and the ass his master’s crib.” What
then is the man who is a stranger to grati-
tude? What is he who receives blessings
without being sensible of them, or who en-
joys them without once acknowledging him
who confers them? Duller than the ox,
more stupid than the ass, that man doth
not know, that man doth not consider *.

Thus comely and necessary, we main-
tain, is gratitude, even to an earthly bene-
factor: how comely, how necessary then,
to that Benefactor who is divine, and whose
love is as high above the love of any earth-
ly benefactor, as the heavens are high above
the earth. We cannot sufficiently admire
and extol his creating and preserving good-
ness; what then shall we say of his re-
deeming grace? This is the most wonder-
ful of all his works, and to us, infinitely
the most important that distinguishes the
annals of time. If we attempt its praises,
we find them indeed unutterable; and this

* *Si ingratis dieris, omnia dixeris*, says the Latin maxim
—if you call a man ungrateful, you have called him every
thing that is bad; you need say nothing more

only can we say, that it is easier for the mind to conceive, than the tongue to express the gratitude we should feel. "O bless then the Lord, all ye his saints!" Bless the Lord, O my soul! O let us bless and magnify his holy name; rejoice for ever in Jesus whom he hath sent, and burn with love to Him, who suffered, and bled, and died from his love to us!

"And if the grace of God ought thus to kindle in our breasts the purest flame of gratitude, let me ask, in the next place, if it ought not also to inspire us with the most unbounded *confidence*?—" Yes, will "every true Christian say, with the un- "suspecting confidence of a grateful child "to an indulgent father, will I now raise "mine eyes to heaven, and rely upon the "God of my salvation. He hath already "shown me his abundant grace, he hath "promised me, hereafter, an eternal weight "of glory; and therefore do I now rest as- "sured that he will withhold no good thing "from me, or from any of those who sin- "cerely love him."—This is the faith of the Christian soul; and is it not a faith rational and well-founded? For let there be

mentioned but a single reason of distrust, which the grace of God, upon which this faith rests, is not more than sufficient completely to remove. Does the believer ever fear that the blessings which he requires, are too valuable for heaven to bestow, or for him to receive ? This he need, never fear ; for “the unspeakable gift” which has been already given him, is greater far, than any thing he can now ask ; infinitely greater than all that his heart can desire. Or if he fear not that the blessings themselves are too valuable, yet is he ever afraid, that God is too exalted a Being to bestow them ; too high and lofty to regard such a sinner’s wants, much more so, to condescend to relieve them ? This suggestion, the grace of Heaven, displayed in our redemption, proves also to be groundless ; for those whose souls God sent no less a person than Jesus to redeem, he must ever be ready to support and to deliver. “Can a woman forget “her sucking child ? Can she cease to have “compassion on the son of her womb ?” Yes, she may ; but the Lord will never forget, the Lord will never forsake any of his children. “Nothing, neither life, nor death, “nor things present, nor things to come,

" shall be able to separate them from his love. For whom he once loveth, he loveth unto the end; and they shall never perish, neither shall any be able to pluck them out of his hand. Fear not then, little flock; fear not, for God is with you; be not dismayed, for he is your God. He will strengthen you, yea, he will uphold you with the right hand of his righteousness.

But while the grace of the gospel ought thus to lead us to commit, with unbounded confidence, our souls and all our concerns to the protection and guidance of God, it ought also to prompt us to imitate his character, by being *mild, and merciful, and gracious to one another.*—This amazing grace, we are ready to acknowledge, commands our liveliest gratitude; we should, at this moment, experience it kindling within us a never-dying flame of love. But how can we be grateful to Heaven, if we be unfeeling to our brethren? How can we love God, if we hate his children? It is a contradiction: It is impossible. Can light have fellowship with darkness? Can ever Christ have concord with Belial? Then,

and, not till then, may gratitude to the Lord consist with want of brotherly kindness and charity towards men. Whomsoever we sincerely love, we must desire to please, and delight to imitate. If then we really love God; if his abundant grace excite within us the genuine sentiments of gratitude, we must be zealous to imitate this goodness which we adore; we must delight to be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful, and perfect as he is perfect. Hath he been slow to anger against us? Then, surely, we ought to suffer long and be kind to our brethren. Hath he ransomed our race from death, and proclaimed pardon and peace to all, even the chief of sinners? Then surely ought we to put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, even as God, through Christ, hath forgiven us. Hath he restored to our souls joy through life, enabled us through faith in Jesus to triumph in the hour of death, and prepared for us perfect and immortal happiness in heaven? Then, doubtless, we are pressed, in a manner impossible to be resisted, to imitate, to the utmost of our power, this diffusive,

boundless beneficence ; to study unity, of will and design with our supreme Benefactor, and with our whole heart and strength, to pursue, with him, the perfection and felicity of the universe. Unless these celestial dispositions be in us and abounding, we have received the grace of God in vain. Alas ! alas ! it hath profited us nothing. For what say the Scriptures ? “ In this “ the children of God are manifest, and the “ children of the devil ;—whosoever doth “ not righteousness, is not of God, neither “ he that loveth not his brother. If a man “ say I love God, and hateth his brother, “ he is a liar ; he is a murderer, and ye “ know that no murderer hath eternal life “ abiding in him.” Let us take heed then, that an evil, malignant heart be not within us. O ! let all bitterness and wrath, and anger and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from us, with all malice, and if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any bowels and mercies, O ! let us fulfil the royal law, be of one accord and of one mind, and as God hath loved us, so let us love one another.

But let the grace revealed in the gospel, not only make us grateful, not only make us confide in heaven, not only make us love and do good, as we have opportunity, to our brethren;—let it not confine its influence to these, or to any other particular class of sentiments or duties; but let it operate upon the general tenor of our conduct: let it constrain us carefully to observe all things, whatsoever God hath commanded us. If the marvellous grace of the Lawgiver prompt us to keep *any one part* of the law, let it also prompt us to keep *the whole*. As all its precepts come enjoined to us from the same gracious authority, let them all, therefore, receive the same sincere and uniform regard. By this, however, I mean not to say, that from the unspeakable grace with which we have been favoured, it is expected that our services should be perfect. Alas! there is not a perfect man upon the earth; none “that doeth good and sinneth not.” I mean only to say that our obedience, though necessarily defective, must nevertheless be faithful and general, be cordial and unreserved. If we profess to be the children of God: if like them we profess to be grateful for the grace which he hath given us, though we may be surprised into the com-

mission of a fault, yet we must never habitually offend. Though, through ignorance or weakness, we may fall into occasional transgressions; yet we must keep our hearts with diligence, we must ponder our paths, and never go on in presumptuous sin; but take delight in keeping every one of the commandments. If, then, at any time, we fall, let us not obdurately remain in that state; if we transgress, let us immediately repent, and let not our repentance be a transient effervescence of compunction; but a lasting renewal of integrity. Then shall “the beauty of the Lord our “God be upon us: He will establish the “work of our hands.” He will bless us with the richest communications of his grace; we shall “rejoice and be glad all our days.”

—Come then, all ye faithful servants of the Lord; all ye who prize the exceeding riches of his grace; come let us now praise his blessed name, and without a moment's delay, and without the least reserve, let us give up ourselves to his government. Like good and grateful subjects, let us stand at his footstool, in everlasting readiness to fulfil his word; to do whatever he commands, and to bear whatever he inflicts; to

live and zealously maintain his cause, or, if necessary, cheerfully to suffer and die in its defence.

These are the pious sentiments which the grace of the gospel should inspire, and these are the duties which it should incite us to perform.—It should fire us with gratitude, and fill us with confidence ; it should inspire us with mutual charity, and prompt us to universal and everlasting obedience.

And blessed indeed, are all those upon whose souls this divine grace produces such effects ! Who would not congratulate them upon the happiness of their state ? They are the friends of God ; “ the excellent of the earth.”—“ There is none like unto you, “ O people ! saved by the Lord. Truly “ the lines have fallen to you in pleasant “ places ; you have a goodly heritage ;— “ for all things are yours, whether Paul, or “ Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or “ death, or things present, or things to come, “ all are yours ; and ye are Christ’s, and “ Christ is God’s.”—O praise Him then, for his wondrous benefits ; make melody with his angels who excel in strength ; swell with

them the choral song of gratitude, and be glad and rejoice in the house of your pilgrimage.

But, perhaps, there are some serious, well disposed persons, with the state of whose souls, the voice of joy does not accord ; the address of congratulation is not suited to them, and with any exhortation to gladness, they tell us, that in their circumstances, it is impossible to comply. The grace published in the gospel, they know, is indeed abundant ; but they dwell upon the criminal abuse which they have already made of it ; they dwell upon the impious and unnatural returns which they have so often rendered to the Author of it,—and this abundant grace, instead of filling them with joyful hope, only pierces their hearts with keener sorrow. They go mourning as one who mourneth for an only child ; they are in bitterness as he who is in bitterness for his first born, and they turn aside, and refuse to be comforted.

' Broken hearted, and disconsolate men ! ye do well to be sorrowful, for godly sorrow worketh repentance, ; but, O ! why do ye

sorrow as they who have no hope? Your iniquities may indeed be great and numberless; but the Lord is merciful and gracious, and will abundantly pardon. Because men were sinners, he sent his Son to die, and though you be the chief of sinners, he is both able and willing "to save you to the uttermost."—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, and by him all that believe are freely justified from all things." Come then to God, through Christ, and he will in no wise cast you out. Come unto him, weary and heavy laden, and, from his grace, you shall find rest unto your souls. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Awake, and sing then ye that dwell in dust;" and let the tongue of the dumb sing forth the Almighty's praise! "Sing, O heavens! and be joyful, O earth! and break forth into singing, O mountains! for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted."

Thus then, do we congratulate the good, and thus can we console the penitent. We congratulate the good, because they have

improved the grace of God so wisely, and we console the penitent, because now with broken and contrite hearts, they lament that they have improved it so ill. But what shall we say to those who never think of improving it at all?—who, to this hour possess none of the feelings which it is intended to excite, nay, who scornfully reject all the precious blessings which it offers to bestow.—Perverse and obdurately wicked men! surely you know not what you are doing. Surely you know not the aggravated guilt which you are, at present, incurring, and the awful punishment to which, if you repent not, you shall hereafter be doomed. You are despising the greatest salvation that can be offered you; you are grieving the Holy Spirit who strives with you: you are denying the Lord who bought you, slighting all his labours of love, treading under foot his precious blood, and putting him to open shame. And for all this be assured, presumptuous sinners! that God will bring you into judgment. Now is the season of his grace, and as yet he is slow to anger, and of great mercy towards you. But this season of grace will expire, the great day of his wrath will come, and

then shall he who hath so long waited to be gracious, be revealed in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon you, and all who obey not the gospel. With Judas, and the sons of perdition, you shall be driven from his presence and "turned into hell." There, like them, you shall be tortured with remorse ; like them you shall be convulsed with agony, and like them, you shall wish that you "had never been born."—Knowing these terrors of the Lord, we persuade men. We, as ambassadors from Christ, pray them in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. God himself beseeches them, by us ; therefore to day, may they hear his voice, and harden not their hearts ! May they turn from the evil of their ways, come into his gracious presence, like returning prodigals, cast themselves at his feet, and thus pour forth their penitent hearts before him ! " Father in heaven ! we havehei-
" noulsy sinned against thee in times past,
" but strengthen us by thy grace, that we
" may do so no more. Work in us both to
" will and to do thy good pleasure. Of our-
" selves, we are, indeed, weak and insuffi-
" cient ; but, O Father ! we will depend up-
" on thee : we will go on in thy strength,

"making mention of thy righteousness,
"even of thine only. O ! through Jesus,
"may all our sins be forgiven us ; through
"him may we now receive numberless to-
"kens of thy abundant grace, and be ad-
"mitted at last into eternal glory."

If the wicked thus forsake their ways,
if thus shall become the state of their hearts,
if this shall be the pious purpose of their
souls, then both the saints on earth, and
the angels in heaven will rejoice at their
conversion ; they will rejoice at their re-
turn to God, and hail them as his children.
God himself will thus speak peace to their
troubled souls ;—“ Fear not, for it is my
“ good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

THE
**STRENGTH AND VICTORY OF
BELIEVERS.**

I JOHN V. 4.

Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

THE Apostle, in the context, reminds the Christians to whom this epistle is addressed of their divine origin; that they were "born of God;" and thence infers their obligation to love and do good to one another, as children of the same heavenly Father. He at the same time naturally reminds them of their duty in general; for whatever reason there is for our being con-

scientious in the discharge of any one duty, there certainly is for our being conscientious in the discharge of every other. If we be Christians, God is our reconciled God and Father : we ought therefore sincerely and ardently to love him, and "this is the " (evidence of) the love of God that we keep " his commandments, and his commandments (adds the apostle) are not grievous." They are all both reasonable in themselves, and adapted to promote both our temporal and eternal interests. But if we would keep the commandments of God, there is one thing we should never forget—and of which the apostle here puts us in remembrance, the necessity of rising superior to the dangerous motives and considerations presented by the world. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world ; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

If we have just views of this world, we shall consider it not as a place of rest ; but as a field of labour and conflict ; not as a scene where we may gratify without restraint our appetites and passions ; but as a probationary state, where we must with

unremitting zeal aspire after the improvement of our intellectual and moral natures. We may "use the world;" but we are to use it as "not abusing it." We must never be enslaved by its maxims, its manners or its pleasures: this slavery is the degradation and ruin of the immortal mind. It offends God, and necessarily disqualifies us for being received into the inheritance of the saints in light. Hence we are exhorted "not to love the world; neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."—Inordinate attachment to this world, is incompatible with ardent desires after that better world which is to come.—We cannot serve both God and Mammon. Accordingly, victory over the world is characteristic of the Christian. He "is born of God," and "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

These striking words call for our serious attention: In discoursing from them therefore, let us consider the noble character which is here mentioned—the formidable

enemy whom he contends with and conquers—the successful weapon which he wields, and the glorious felicity which follows.—May the Lord now take the direction of our minds, and accompany what shall be said with his rich and effectual blessing.

I. We are first to consider the noble character which is here mentioned. It is a character, the greatest and most illustrious that can adorn the earth. The Apostle is speaking of one who is the chosen offspring of heaven—of one who is “born not of the “will of the flesh, nor of the will of man; “but of God;” and who is therefore an “heir of God, and a joint-heir with Jesus “Christ.”

To be “born of God,” is to rise out of the ruins of a fallen nature to the glory of a redeemed one. It is to die to Adam and to live to Christ. It is to see, and feel, and forsake our own weakness, and vanity, and sin, and adhere to the strength, and sufficiency, and righteousness of the Captain of our Salvation. He then who is “born of “God” is “brought out of darkness into “marvellous light.” He strives to com-

bend, with all saints, "what is the breadth,
" and length, and depth, and heighth of the
" love of Christ, which passeth knowledge;"
and this infinite love constrains him to yield
a sincere, habitual, and filial obedience.
Renewed in the spirit of his mind, he hates
sin which he once loved, and loves holiness,
which he once hated. Once his mind was
enmity against God, and bent only upon ful-
filling the desires of the flesh; but now he
crucifies the flesh with its affections and
lusts; endeavours to abstain even from *all*
appearance of evil, and, in imitation of our
blessed Lord, counts it as his meat and
drink to do the will of his heavenly Father.
He is "born of God," and you may easily
see from his dispositions and deportment,
that he is indeed a partaker of a *divine* na-
ture. Observe his devout humility and re-
verence—"I acknowledge my transgres-
" sions, and my sin is ever before me."—
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and
"done this evil in thy sight." "Lord,
" what is man, that thou art mindful of
"him? and the son of man, that thou vi-
" sitest him?" Listen to the delightful
language of his grateful heart. "Behold,
" what manner of love the Father hath be-

bestowed upon us that we should be called
“the sons of God.” “ Bless the Lord, O
my soul; and all that is within me, bless
his Holy name : bless the Lord, O my
soul, and forget not all his benefits, who
forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who heal-
eth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy
life from destruction ; who crowneth thee
with loving kindness and tender mercies.”
Witness his submissive behaviour when un-
der the heavy pressure of affliction :—“ It
is the Lord,” saith he, “ let him do what
seemeth him good ;” and, “ It is good, I
know, for me to be afflicted : before I was
afflicted, I went astray ; but now I have
kept thy word. Though afflicted, I need
not despond : God is with me ; and
though the fig-tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be in the vines ; though the la-
bour of the olive should fail, and the fields
yield no meat ; though the flock should
be cut off from the fold, and there should
be no herd in the stalls ; yet I will rejoice
in the Lord : I will joy in the God of my
salvation.” Observe, too, how he feels
and acts towards his fellow-creatures. He
puts away envy, and wrath, and bitter-
ness, and rejoices with them who do rejoice,

and weeps with them who weep. "Behold,
" (says he,) we all are brethren, travelling
" up through the same wilderness, and shall
" soon come to the same end. Where-
" fore, then, should we fall out by the way?
" Let us love and do good to one another
" as we have opportunity—bearing one an-
" other's burdens ; adding to each other's
" joys, and so fulfilling the law of Christ."—
But why multiply particulars? He is "born
" of God," and his constant aim is to act a
part becoming the dignity of his nature,
and the magnificence of his hopes. He
" adds to his faith virtue ; and to virtue
" knowledge ; and to knowledge temper-
" ance ; and to temperance patience ; and
" to patience godliness ; and to godliness,
" brotherly kindness, charity ; and these
" things being in him and abounding, he is
" neither barren nor unfruitful in the know-
" ledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. Such is the character here mentioned ; let us next consider the opposition which, in maintaining his integrity, such a character is called to contend with and to conquer.—It is the opposition of the "world." He who is born of God overcom-

eth the *world*. Ah ! my friends, the very place of our residence is the scene of our danger. This very world, which ministers to our support, solicits our ruin. The world has always been, what it still is, an enemy to religion.—What brings “temptation and a snare?” The *world*. What “pierces men through with many sorrows,” and “drowns them at last in destruction and perdition?” The things of the *world*. What seduced the young foolish prodigal from his Father’s house into guilt, and disgrace, and starvation?—The meretricious enchantments of the *world*. What made Demas forsake both the Apostle and the cause of Christ? The Apostle himself shall answer,—“Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present *world*.” What made Judas betray his Lord? The *world*: he coveted the favour of the Jews, and thirty pieces of silver. And what sent Dives to the torments of hell? The immersion of his mind in “the good things” of this *world*: therefore it was, that while Lazarus was comforted, he was tormented. Ah ! what is it that still makes the multitude around us “depart from the living God?” What makes us all too negligent of “the things

“that belong to our peace?” What but the principles; the example; the business; the cares or the gratifications of this evil *world*. . . . Hence it is emphatically said,— “Know ye not that the friendship of the *world* is enmity with God.—Whoever therefore will be a friend of the *world*, is the enemy of God.” He then who is a friend of God,—he who is “born of God,” renounces, in some measure, the *world*. He is willing indeed to enjoy with moderation its gains and comforts; but he despises them all when they come into competition with his immortal interests. He rates at their due value the things that are seen and temporal; and as this is comparatively very low, he reserves his chief ardour for those things which are unseen and eternal. Give him but food and raiment here, and he learns therewith to be content. His desire and prayer is, that he may resemble the Apostle Paul: that like him he may be able to say with sincerity and truth—“the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.” Thus does he deny himself, take up his cross and follow Christ. Yes, he “is born of God, and he overcomes the world.”

“ Overcome the world ! methinks, I hear
“ some say ; who can do this ? Nature hath
“ implanted within us appetites and pas-
“ sions, and given us objects in abundance
“ with which to gratify them. To lay then
“ a restraint upon these, or in other words,
“ *to overcome the world*, is surely unnatural :
“ it is to make ourselves miserable, and to
“ act in direct opposition to that gracious
“ Being who hath constituted us such as we
“ are.”

True, Nature, or rather the God of Nature, hath implanted within you appetites and passions ; these then are natural : But who told you that their present corrupt direction is natural. God, originally, created your nature after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. He designed all your appetites and passions to be kept under the control of right reason : he designed you to be improved and spiritualized, and thus made meet for the kingdom of heaven. Who told you then that God created you merely for this *world*, and to take up your rest on its empty perishing pleasures ?—These your wrong-directed appetites and passions are the proofs of your fall : you have them in common with the

beasts of the field. Your whole constitution is weak and disordered, though you think yourselves healthy and strong. This world is but your temporary prison, though your diseased imagination may represent it as a palace. You are only dreaming, though you flatter yourselves that you are wide awake. You are in thick darkness, and cannot appreciate the value of surrounding objects.—Let the Sun of Righteousness but dart one beam into your benighted souls, and you will soon discover the deception, and long for the power of his grace to enable you to triumph over those evil passions which you now indulge, and to overcome that *world* which hath been so long cheating you with visionary gratifications. But if still you will not believe, but are determined to “live after the flesh : “then you shall die ; but if through the spirit “you do mortify the deeds of the body, you “shall live ; for as many as are led by the “Spirit of God are the Sons of God,” and being the Sons of God, “they overcome “the world.”

“Overcome the world !” methinks I hear even some humble, saint hearted Christian exclaim, “I have for months and years

" been attempting this ; but have never yet
" been able to accomplish it. Temptation
" carries me away. When I would stand,
" then I fall ; when I would do good, then
" evil is present with me. Tell me then
" how I shall increase my strength, how I
" shall overcome the world, and what I shall
" do to be saved."—

Fear not, Christian, God is with you, and greater is he who is with you than all who can be against you. "He will strengthen you ; yea, he will help you ; yea, he will uphold you with the right hand of his righteousness." But while struggling for victory, let me ask, have you duly attended to the means by which victory may be obtained ? In the Christian warfare, there is an appointed weapon which we must wield. That weapon is *faith*.—"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

III. The faith here meant, respects the declarations and promises of God as he is manifested through Jesus, and implies the soul's fixed reliance upon him for the performance. This is the *faith* which strength-

ense and elevates the mind : which overcomes the world, and without which it is impossible to please God.—What is the whole of religion but a struggle between sense and faith ? To what are we tempted to sin but by the possessions and pleasures of the present world ? And by what are we induced to the practice of holiness, but by the infinitely superior possessions and pleasures of the future world. Now, the possessions and pleasures of the present world are the objects of sense. Through the senses they find admission to the mind, and there shed all their baneful influence. By sense then, the unregenerate man may justly be said to be seduced, debased, and enslaved.—Again the possessions and pleasures of the future world, are evidently from the very circumstance of their being future, and consequently invisible, the objects of faith. By faith only their value is appreciated ; their influence felt, and that holiness produced for the sake of which they have been graciously revealed.—Is it true, then, that by sense we are made the servants of sin ? Then it is equally true, that by faith we are made free from all sin ; enabled to walk close with God, and “overcome the world.”

Now this view of faith exactly accords with the description of it given by the Apostle Paul. " Faith (saith he,) is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." Heb. xi. 1. *The things hoped for* are the things of futurity—the things which according to St. Paul are not seen. Rom. viii. 24. " We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" Now without faith there can be no hope; for if we do not believe in things future, we cannot possibly hope for them. Hope therefore is indebted to faith for all its objects; for these objects with respect to hope, would be mere non-entities were it not for faith. Considered therefore as *things hoped for*, they owe their being and substance to faith. " Faith then is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." *The things not seen*, are those glorious rewards which God hath prepared for his servants in the kingdom of heaven. Now as these rewards are the objects, neither of sense nor of science, but revealed to us by the declarations and promises of God; the only evidence upon which we can receive them, is the evidence of faith. We believe that the

exist, because we believe the gospel of Christ; and we believe that they shall be conferred upon the Christian, because we believe that "He is faithful who hath promised." The Christian therefore, believing in God as he is manifested through Jesus Christ, knows and remembers that the objects of sense are awfully dangerous to his everlasting interests. He accordingly becomes habitually on his guard, lest they should take an undue possession of his mind. He "watches and "is sober unto the end." He "walks not "after the flesh but after the spirit," endures hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and though without strength in himself, yet through faith in him who is Omnipotent, he holds fast his integrity, and "overcom- "eth the world." "What, (he reasons with "himself,) what are the gains of the whole "world compared with the salvation of my "soul? What are the favour and friend- "ship of man, compared with the favour "and friendship of God? What are all "the visionary gratifications of time, com- "pared with the unutterable perfection "and pleasures of eternity? Whataeever "others then do, I will serve the Lord; "and in this service what difficulties should "dismay me? what dangers should alarm

" me ? I. may be strong in the grace
" which is in Christ Jesus ; „ I may do all
" things through him strengthening me.
" I will therefore go on in his name,
" making mention of his righteousness,
" even of his only."—And this, my friends,
is not an ideal character, which exists
only in description. Thanks be unto God,
we can adduce a cloud of witnesses ; an
host of Martyrs and Confessors : multi-
tudes out of every nation, and sex, and con-
dition, who have kept their garments unde-
filed : who have overcome the world, and
been always ready to embrace every form
of suffering and death, rather than abandon
the work of the Lord. Every new difficulty
and trial tended only to make them wax
stronger and stronger. They were invin-
cible, because they believed themselves im-
mortal.

IV. Thus, my friends, have we seen the noble character which is here described : the formidable enemy whom he contends with and conquers, and also the powerful weapon which in this warfare he so successfully wields. Let us next behold the glorious felicity which follows. " Be thou faithful unto " death, and I will give thee a crown of life,"

is the charge of God to the Christian soldier during the period of his conflict. Death at last comes, and the exceeding great and precious promise is amply fulfilled. He falls asleep in Jesus; he "rests from his labours, " and his works do follow him." He has no longer any reason to mourn over his frailty and sin: he no longer feels a law in his members warring against the law of his mind. Elected a citizen of Zion, he is presented blameless before the throne. Every stain that once tarnished the robe of virtue, is now washed away. Every corruption is uprooted from the heart: every disquieting fear driven from the soul: every enemy laid prostrate on the field. The Christian is made holy as God is holy, and perfect as he is perfect. No wish is denied: no expectation disappointed. He has overcome through the blood of the Lamb; and he "sits down with the Lamb on his throne, " even as he also hath overcome and sat "down with the Father on his throne." And as his happiness shall thus be complete —unutterable—it shall also be eternal. The heavens shall pass away, the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth and all its works shall be dissolved; but he who is "born of God," shall flourish in life

immortal. When millions of ages have elapsed; his happiness shall seem but just commencing; and when millions more have passed and gone, it will be no nearer ending.—And as his happiness as to its duration, will never be at an end, so as to its purity and perfection, it will never be at its height. To the progress of the blessed no boundary is set. Throughout all the ages of eternity they shall be adorning themselves with new beauties; be still improving in knowledge, still growing in grace, and brightening in the splendours of moral glory.

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was favoured before his departure with a vision of these ransomed of the Lord. And hear, my friends, how he describes what he beheld.—“ I beheld and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindred, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, cloathed with white robes, and palms in their hands: and cried with a loud voice, saying,—Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”—And upon inquiry what these happy beings were, and whence they came, he was told—“ These are they which came out of great tribulation, and

“ have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more; neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

My friends, knowing that this is the glorious reward of the Christian Conqueror, shall it not be our earnest desire to inhale his spirit; to emulate his deeds; to possess his character? It is a character the noblest and most blessed upon earth. It assimulates us to superior natures, and makes them our allies and our friends. But what is of infinitely greater consequence, it is a character to which God himself is a friend: it is the seal of his children: it is a character which he will cherish, perfect, bless, and delight in, world without end. But remember, Brethren, that this character cannot be obtained by the volatile; the

idle and indifferent. It is a character the possession of which requires much thought, vigilant care, unwearied patience, and unremitting exertion.—The whole of our journey through life is attended with difficulty and danger. Who then, that has any regard for his immortal soul, will blindly follow the impulse of unregenerate nature, walk according to the course of this evil world, and say to himself, “ peace, peace, “ when there is no peace.” Awake thou that sleepest, hear the voice of God, and harden not your hearts. He now calls you to glory and to virtue: obey his call; escape from the miserable thraldom of sense and passion: accept the liberty of the free-born sons of light: pray for faith to direct and elevate your mind; to enable you to “ overcome the world,” and to go on from strength to strength, till you appear before God in Zion. Only let your prayer be sincere, and it shall be heard and accepted. “ Ask and you shall receive: seek and you “ shall find.” You shall “ obtain mercy” through Jesus Christ; “ and find grace to “ help you in every time of need.”

Christians, I intreat you, in particular, never to be discouraged in your spiritual

warfare. You have every reason to stand, and be of good courage ; but none to be weary, or faint in your minds. Arduous, I know, is the work you are called to perform ; but you are not called to perform it in your own strength : you have to overcome the world ; but you are to overcome it by faith ; and faith, let me remind you, is the gift of God. Pray then to God who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not :—earnestly pray,—“ Lord we believe, “ help thou our unbelief.” There is no adversary too powerful ; no work too difficult for him who relies on the Omnipotent. David, though a stripling, vanquished with ease the giant of Gath, because “ he went “ out against him,” not in his own strength, but “ in the name of the Lord of hosts, “ the God of the armies of Israel.” The world with all its temptations and allurements, will be as easily overcome by him who is truly “ born of God,” as the uncircumcised Philistine was by the hand of David. “ All things are possible to him “ that believeth.” He “ puts on the whole “ armour of God,” and God himself is with him, and will be with all who put their trust in him, even to the end of the world.

Christians, consider this : consider too, that the same armour and the same mighty Power are yours—all things are yours—consider this, and persevere in your glorious conflict. Never “cast away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward : but building up yourselves in your most holy faith ; praying in the Holy Ghost ; keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”—“Now, our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work :” and enable you to say, with gratitude and with triumph, when your labours are ended,—“I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my course : I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day ; and not to me only ; but unto all them also that love his appearing.”—*Amen.*

THE PRESENT HAPPINESS OF BELIEVERS.

ROM. XV. 13.

Now, the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The first Christians not only believed in the religion of Jesus ; but were peculiarly qualified "to give to every one that asked "them a reason of the" belief "that was "in them." At once, they referred to the heavenly doctrines which they heard their Master deliver : to the divine life which they saw him lead ; and to the astonishing miracles which they saw him perform. They referred also to "the" "of the "Holy Ghost," which they themselves had received from him. They were therefore

" strong in faith, giving glory to God." They felt too their faith producing the most desirable ; the most delightful effects upon their minds. They believed, and were " filled with all joy, and peace, and " hope in believing."

When we consider the many and distinguishing privileges with which, both before and immediately after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the primitive believers were favoured, we are apt to regret that it was not our lot to live in those happy days. We sometimes imagine that we have reason to complain of not having the same impelling motives which they had, to attach us to our holy religion. However wrong this spirit is, yet, perhaps, we have all more or less indulged it ; and exclaimed like Esau, when deprived of his father's blessing,—“ Hast thou but one “ blessing, my father ?” But such language should never proceed out of our mouth ; for he who was so eminently the God of the first Christians, is our God likewise. The miraculous powers and extraordinary grace conferred upon them, tended to establish and extend our religion, and thus to

confirm our faith in it. By being bestowed upon them, they were therefore indirectly bestowed upon us. Besides, God is still ready to confer upon us, in a *direct* manner, grace to help us in every time of need. "Every good and perfect gift still comes down from the father of lights." He still offers to "bless us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ." We do not, it is true, behold at present miracles performed; but what is far more valuable, is fully put in our power, and what, if we have but faith and zeal, we shall certainly obtain. My friends, only attend to the words of my text, and you may judge of the value of what I mean. "Now 'the God of hope,'" says the Apostle, &c.

These words, give us such a beautiful and attractive picture of Christianity, and of the effects it is suited to produce, that methinks, the contemplation of it can scarcely fail to increase the zeal, the joy, and consolation of all who truly believe in it; and even provoke to a holy emulation those who have hitherto been strangers to it. O may this be the blessed fruit of the re-

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lections which I am now to make, and
which my text has naturally suggested.

The illustration of the three following propositions, will perhaps fully unfold to you all that is contained in the Apostle's prayer.

The FIRST proposition is,—Faith naturally tends to fill the soul with the most pleasant and delightful feelings—*peace, joy, and hope*. For Paul here supposes, that it is by *faith* that we are made partakers of these invaluable blessings. “God;” says he, “fill you with all joy and peace in *believing*.”

The SECOND proposition is,—Though faith does naturally tend to fill the soul with these pleasing and delightful feelings, yet, even true Christians do not always fully enjoy them. Hence it is that the Apostle so earnestly prays that God would *increase* to such, these feelings.

The THIRD proposition is,—That if even we labour with success, to remove the ob-

stacles, which may prevent our full enjoyment of these feelings, we must receive the assistance of "the Holy Ghost," and, like the Apostle, fervently and habitually pray for this assistance, both to ourselves and others.

I. The FIRST proposition is,—Faith naturally tends to fill the soul with the most pleasant and delightful fulness, pleasure, and hope. What a different representation this, from what ignorance or malice often give of religion. Hear the language of worldly men. They depict religion as something melancholy, gloomy, and morose—as something fitted rather to make us miserable, at least here below—than to make us happy. But whose judgment are we to prefer upon this subject—the judgment of him who knows nothing of the matter, or the judgment of one who has had mature experience—the judgment of the man of the world, or the judgment of the Apostle Paul, who "overcame the "world"—believed and glorified in the gospel of his Lord and Saviour, and most sensibly felt its purifying, consoling, and ennobling power?—The wise, and the candid,

will have little hesitation in making a decision. The Apostle Paul acquainted "himself with God," and found him to be a "God of hope." A God who gave him "all joy and peace in believing." And that the Apostle was under no delusion—that belief in God, as he hath graciously revealed himself to us, is really productive of these blessed effects, will appear, whether we consider the nature of this itself, or consult the experience of real Christians in all ages.

Let us consider the nature of the thing itself. If I really believe that God reigneth, and that he hath revealed himself through Jesus Christ, as my Father and my friend—if I really believe that he possesses infinite power and wisdom, and goodness, and that he is continually exercising all these perfections, for my moral improvement and final happiness, is it not evident, that this belief has a natural tendency to fill my soul with joy, and peace, and hope?

What have I to fear under such a gracious government? Am I afraid to meet the trials, and the troubles of life? If I believe in God, I know that he sends these as

blessings in disguise—and will make them all work together for my good. Am I afraid of the power of sin, and of the consequences which it may entail upon me at the day of judgment? If I believe in God, I know that Christ his only begotten Son, hath “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,”—that “there is now no condemnation to “those who are in Him, and who walk not “after the flesh, but after the spirit,”—that nothing shall be able “to separate me from “his love—that I shall never perish, neither “shall any be able to pluck me out of his “hand.” In fine, am I afraid of the approach of death, and of the awful and untried scenes to which it will lead me?—If I believe in God, I know, that death is nothing more than a messenger to conduct me to my Father’s house, where I shall “rest from my labours, and be followed by “my works;” to my Father’s house, where I shall “behold his face in righteousness, “and be satisfied with his likeness.” Knowing and believing these things, I need fear no evil—I may safely trust that goodness and mercy shall for ever follow me—I may look upon death as a vanquished foe, and take up this triumphant song,

“O death where is thy sting? O grave “where is thy victory?” I may indulge a hope, “which maketh not ashamed,” maintain a “peace which passeth all understanding,” and “rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

But on this head, not only consider the nature of this belief itself; consult also the experience of those who have fully exercised it. But here a field opens far too extensive to be travelled over. How can I even name, much less describe, the happiness of all those who have lived by faith on the Son of God? The time would fail me, to mention only those whose names stand upon the sacred record. Let me therefore, here, confine myself to the experience of the Apostle Paul, who in the fulness of his heart, offered up the pious benevolent prayer contained in our text. His is a case perfectly in point; and it will preclude the necessity of enumerating others. He believed in God; he believed also in his only begotten and well-beloved Son—and his faith was, confessedly active and genuine. “He counted all things but loss, &c.”—ie “counted not even his

"life dear," &c. "He was stedfast and
"unmoveable," &c.

" And did not his faith bring upon him all the trials and troubles which, humanly speaking, could embitter mortal existence?" You remember the words of Jesus when he called him to the Apostleship—" I will show him " what great things he must suffer for my " names sake." And his whole history demonstrates, that there never was a prediction more literally fulfilled.— Yet amid all these trials and troubles which befel him, and which would have made a worldly man of all creatures the most miserable, did holy Paul feel himself miserable? Did he not find in his faith an ample recompence for his sorest tribulations? Was not this man of God, actually " filled with all joy and " peace in believing, and did he not abound " in hope, through the power of the Holy " Ghost?" Let the sacred monuments of his zeal—let the incomparable epistles which he has written, and in which he seems to be devoted to the salvation of his brethren, bear witness to the blessed state of his mind."

Hear how he there expresses his *joy*.—
 “ Thanks be unto God, who always causeth
 “ us to triumph in Christ.” “ What thanks
 “ can we render to God, for all the joy
 “ wherewith we joy for your sakes? Yea,
 “ and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and
 “ service of your faith, I joy and rejoice
 “ with you all; for the same cause also, do
 “ ye joy and rejoice with me.” “ I know
 “ whom I have believed,” &c *.

Hear too how he speaks of his *peace*.
 “ Being justified by faith, we have peace
 “ with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 “ In nothing I shall be ashamed;—but with
 “ all boldness Christ shall be magnified in
 “ my body, whether it be by life or by
 “ death; for to me to live is Christ, and to
 “ die is gain.” “ And hear how he declares
 “ his hope. We through the spirit, wait
 “ for the hope of righteousness by faith.”
 “ We trust in the living God, who is the
 “ Saviour of all men, especially of those
 “ that believe.” “ The Lord shall deliver
 “ me from every evil work, and will pre-

—

“serve me to his heavenly kingdom.”—
“Behold I show you a mystery : we shall
“not all sleep ; but we shall all be changed
“in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye,
“and the dead shall be raised incorruptible,
“and we shall be changed ; for this cor-
“ruptible must put on incorruption, and
“this mortal immortality.” And even
when the hour of his departure was come—
that trying hour, when every ill founded
hope generally fails us ; the high hope of
the Apostle remained unshaken, or rather
became more elevated and stedfast. He
seemed to be indeed already “risen with
“Christ : he seemed to be already seated
“with him in heavenly places. He laid
“hold on eternal life.” He anticipated the
glory and felicity of that kingdom into
which he was entering. Such, my friends,
was the experience of the Apostle—such
the divine power, which he found faith in
the gospel to have on his mind. But is the
experience of all true Christians the same ?
Have they all uniformly such “joy, and
“peace, and hope in believing?”—No, my
friends, neither the gospel nor experience
authorise us to say so. Accordingly, the
second proposition which we laid down for

the discussion of this interesting subject, was, you remember, the following:

II. Though faith naturally tends to fill the soul with the most pleasant and delightful feelings, yet even true Christians do not always fully enjoy them. The truth of this proposition is, unhappily but too fully verified. It appears from the very words of the text; for Paul would not have prayed with such earnestness, that God would give the pious Romans, to whom the epistle is addressed, all *joy* and *peace in believing*, and *abundance of hope*, if their belief had uniformly and fully produced these blessed effects.—It appears also from woful experience. The slightest observation of the religious world is more than sufficient to convince us, that however much faith naturally tends to yield to the soul holy quietude and pleasing expectation, yet it does not always exempt it from disquietude and dejection. How many faithful men have had occasion, amidst their spiritual anguish, to remonstrate with themselves in the language of the Psalmist, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou

"in God, for I shall yet praise him who is
"the health of my countenance," and my
"God." Faithful men experience this
disquietude and dejection from various
causes.

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They experience it often from their natural constitution. The body and the mind are near relations, and the state of the former must deeply affect that of the latter. Though faith then directly tends to fill a man with *joy* and *peace*, and *hope*, yet, an unhappy constitution of body may, in a great measure, obstruct this tendency, and cause the mind to behold, even the most comforting and enlivening objects, through a dark and gloomy medium.

Again, Believers often experience disquietude and dejection from their spiritual languor and backsliding. Though they have true faith; though undoubtedly this "root of the matter," is in them, yet, when in any degree they neglect to cherish and improve it; no wonder that it does not produce in them all its "pleasant fruits." When by their foul unworthy declensions,

they grieve and offend the Holy Spirit, no wonder that the Holy Spirit withdraws his consoling and beautifying influences, and leaves them to go on their way sorrowing. How their ingenuous hearts are wrung with grief, for their ingenuousness never *wholly* forsakes them, when Jesus says to them, as he did to the backsliding church of Ephesus,—“ I have something “ against thee, because thou hast left thy “ first love. Remember, therefore, from “ whence thou art fallen, and repent, and “ do the first works, or else I will come “ unto thee quickly, and will remove thy “ candlestick out of its place, except thou “ repent.”

Another cause of their disquietude and dejection, besides their voluntary spiritual languor and backsliding, are the infirmities and sins, which, notwithstanding all the care and vigilance of which they are capable, will still adhere to them. “ There is “ not a just man upon earth, that doeth “ good and sinneth not.” Iniquities, we must all confess, cleave even to our holiest services. Consciousness of this throws a

damp upon the ardour of the soul, and interrupts for a while its joy and peace, and hope in believing.

The last cause of the disquietude and dejection of the faithful, which I shall mention, though others might be stated, is the prevailing wickedness of the world in which they dwell. In proportion, Christians, to your own love and obedience to the law of God, which is so holy, and just, and good, must be your sorrow when you see such multitudes around you wantonly transgressing it. "Rivers of waters," will often "run down your eyes," when you see them capable of such guilt—when you see them despising their own mercies—rejecting the counsel of God against themselves. "What! ah what shall become of them!" "I am grieved in spirit at their conduct, "and I tremble for their doom. I cannot "but feel—exquisitely feel for them; for "however unworthy—however ungrateful, "they are still my brethren—my kinsmen, "according to the flesh. Would that God "would grant them repentance to the ac- "knowledging of the truth!—for except "they repent, they must perish." A re-

flection like this, is indeed enough to give the Christian the most poignant pain, and conspires with other causes, to interrupt for a season, the experience of his *joy*, and *peace*, and *hope in believing*.

But let us now proceed to the illustration of the THIRD Proposition, which is. We must labour to remove the obstacles which prevent our full enjoyment of the spiritual happiness supplicated in our text,—and must, if we would labour with success, receive the assistance of the Holy Ghost—and like the Apostle, fervently and habitually pray for this assistance, both to ourselves and others.

Yes—we must, undoubtedly, labour to remove the obstacles, which prevent our full enjoyment of the spiritual happiness which is here prayed for. The Apostle intimates, that our spiritual happiness is derived to us through faith—“The God, (says “he,) of hope, fill you with all joy and peace “in believing,”—that is, through faith. And must not we labour to increase and invigorate our faith?—to keep it in constant action—to make it an ever-living principle

in our minds.' The more lively and operative this principle is, the greater shall be our happiness—the greater our *joy* in the Holy Ghost,—the more delighting the testimony of our own consciences—and the more ardent our *hope* of seeing and partaking of the glory of God. We cannot indeed at present expect to have this happiness complete, because there are causes, some of which we have mentioned, continually marring it, and which it is at present beyond our power entirely to remove. But though we cannot at present entirely remove them, we may certainly be / by diminishing their force: and the instrument which we are to employ for this purpose, is our most holy faith. The just "shall live by faith;"—and if we would live like the just; if we would live as it becometh the gospel, we must do give all diligence to improve our faith) We are called upon to "continue in the faith,"—to be "established in the faith,"—to abound in "faith;"—to watch, and stand fast in the "faith," and to shew the genuineness and strength of our faith, by continually adding to it new degrees of "virtue, know-

" ledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, and charity." Now, unremitting attention to all this, will be found to be, not only our indispensable duty; but our highest interest. God will lead us gradually on to perfection, and in this moral and most honourable progress, give us increasing "joy and peace, and hope in believing."

But to make our labour, in this "work the Lord successful, let it even be remembered, that it is absolutely necessary for us to receive the assistance of the Holy Ghost. Without his assistance, we can do nothing;"—it is he who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."—This truth is so plainly, so explicitly, and so frequently declared—that it is astonishing, that it should ever have been doubted or forgotten, by any who profess to believe the scriptures to be a divine revelation. Is it not expressly affirmed, that "no man can say, that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost?" Is it not expressly affirmed,

that "by grace we are saved, through faith,
" and that not of ourselves; it is the gift
" of God *."—All our virtues, and all our
enjoyments have this divine origin. "Love,
" joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness,
" goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,"
are all "the fruits of the Spirit."—It is the
same Spirit who enables us to "cry, Abba
" Father !." It is he, who "beareth wit-
ness with our spirits, that we are the chil-
dren of God." It is the same holy, and
blessed spirit, who "helpeth our infirmi-
ties," and "maketh intercession for us,
" with groanings, which cannot be uttered.
" ed †." "The love of God, is shed abroad
" in the hearts" of all true Christians, "by
" the Holy Ghost, which is given unto
" them §." It is the Holy Ghost, who
" seals them unto the day of redemption ||."
But to prove this, we need refer only to
the words of our text: they evidently sup-
pose, that it is by "the power of the Holy
" Ghost," that we are 'filled with all joy
" and peace, and hope in believing.'

* Eph. ii. 8.

† Rom. viii. 15.

‡ Rom. viii. 26.

§ Rom. v. 5.

¶ Eph. iv. 30.

Since, then, the assistance of “the Holy Ghost,” is thus indispensably requisite to our spiritual prosperity, should not all of us be instant in prayer to obtain this assistance?—O how desirable in our pilgrimage through a troublous world, is the communication of *joy* and *peace*, and *hope*. And if we cannot abound in these pleasurable feelings, or even rightly experience them at all, but by “the power of the Holy Ghost,” say—if we should not be importunate in our supplications to God, that he may send the Holy Ghost to dwell in our hearts. If we be not, we are our own enemies: we chuse despair in preference to hope, and misery in preference to happiness. But shall we be so foolish?—God forbid!—Let us constantly, and fervently pray for divine assistance, both to ourselves and to our brethren. Let us pray earnestly, pray that every one of us may obtain the remission of his sins—he enabled, “with the heart to believe to righteousness;”—and not only to believe, but to have “all joy and peace, and hope in believing.”

P.

Ye who are still aliens from God, and care for none of these things, reflect and

immediately turn from the evil of your ways. What a wretched choice you have hitherto made ! You have chosen this world for your portion ; but will you say that it is a satisfying portion for an immortal mind ?—Can it ever give you true *joy*, or *peace*, or *hope* ? Have not you—have not *all* found it to be but “ vanity and vexation of spirit ” “ How long then, “ simple ones, will ye love simplicity ; and “ ye scorers delight in your scorn’g—“ and ye fools hate knowledge : Then ye “ at my reproof, (saith God,) behind I will “ pour out my spirit unto you : I will make “ known my words unto you * God de-lighteth to communicate instruction to the penitent : he delighteth to pardon : he de-lighteth to give “ the spirit of adoption,” even to “ the chief of sinners :” he delight-eth to give “ rest” to, “ the weary and “ heavy laden.” O may the time come, and may it soon com^e, when “ the God of “ hope will fill eveⁿ you with all *joy* and “ *peace*, and *hope* is believing.”

Ye who already believe, let me exhort you to be anxious after still greater conformity to Him who is the great object of your belief. As your characters improve, rest assured, that your consolation shall sooner or latter proportionally abound. And, blessed be God, there is no period to your advancement. Both through time, and through all eternity, you may be continually rising to higher and higher degrees of every thing that is great and good. Never then let this animating, and enabling reflection "slip out of your minds :" remember the high and holy vocation, with which you are called, and "grow in grace, " and in the knowledge of our Lord and "Saviour Jesus Christ." Delight in reading his word ; in meditating upon his precepts ; in contemplating his example, and relying upon his promises. Go on through life, in his name, and devoted to his service. "Quit yourselves like men : be strong"— "gird up the loins of your mind : be sober "and hope unto the end." In due time "you shall reap if you faint not." "And "now, brethren, I commend you to God, "and to the word of his grace." May he

"keep you from falling,"—and "fill you
"with all joy and peace in believing, that
"ye may abound in hope, through the
"power of the Holy Ghost."

FINIS.

*James Clark, Printer,
Cavendish, Lancashire,*

ERRATA.

Page 168 line 8, delete *but*, and for *its* read *Its*.

171 line 12, for *patern*, read *pattern*.

. 250 line 5, for *nuissance*, read *nuisance*.

352 line 4 from the bottom, for *waranted*, read *warranted*.

